South Haven Tribune

$3

October 12, 2025

SH council finalizes master plan objections

Planning commission to hold hearing, send back revisions

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven City Council has finalized its rejections to the proposed five-year master plan that was presented last month.

During Monday's meeting, council members amended its statement of rejections, highlighting its stance against the special use of land in residential areas.

In its September meeting, the city council reviewed and voted against adopting the proposed master plan, citing three main concerns that were to be addressed in the statement of rejection.

City staff were directed to write up the statement of rejections and were brought back for approval during Monday's meeting. Some of the amendments included correcting grammar and spelling errors and making small additions before voting to approve them.

The approved statements of rejection included:

The city council, in accordance with Section 43(4) of the MPEA, hereby rejects the 2025 update to the city of South Haven master plan as recommended by the planning commission and adopts this resolution as its statement of objections.

The city council desires that the master plan provide additional guidance regarding the Manufactured Housing Community (MHC) land use and zoning district. Specifically, the city council desires to that language be added to the master plan clarifying that MHC would not be an appropriate land use in areas with environmental contamination without proper remediation proposed, any MHC land use must be compatible with the surrounding area, and that maps 9-16 related to coastal resilience be considered in any decision to rezone property to MHC.

The city council desires that the future land use map designation for the property at the corner of North Shore Drive and Oak Court (specifically 89 North Shore Drive, Bunde's Bakery) be changed from commercial to multifamily. The city council has concerns that the current designation in the future land use map will lead to the erosion of the residential character of the neighborhood. Furthermore, the city council believes that bakeries, coffee shops, and other neighborhood serving businesses; however, limited, are not compatible with the city's long-term vision for the surrounding neighborhood.

The city council desires that additional language be incorporated into the master plan to specify that the property on Baseline Road (commonly referred to as 120 Baseline) has been identified as an area where residential land use is appropriate for single-family homes or attached residential dwellings and not resorts, specifically workforce and missing middle housing, would be most appropriate.

The planning commission is expected to go over the renewed objections, hold another public hearing and send back a revised master plan to the city council for adoption.

Beginning in March of 2024, the planning commission began the process of updating the city's master plan.

The plan was rewritten in 2018 and in December of 2023, the city council accepted a grant from the Michigan Coastal Management Program to update the plan with a "resilient, coastal community lens."

Other items

The city council approved the amount of $108,395 to be awarded for the Conduit Installation Contract for the Huron Street electrical underground conversion project to Severance Electric.

The city budgeted $700,000 to cover the entire project.

City council approved three special events including:

■ The South Haven Public School Homecoming Parade to be held at 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 17, starting on School Street to Superior Street ending at Ratcliffe Field.

■ The 41st Annual Blueberry Festival Craft Fair to be held from Aug. 7-9 in Stanley Johnston Park.

■ The 50th Annual All Crafts Fair to be held from Sept. 4-6 in Stanley Johnston Park.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

South Haven council reviews code of conduct progress

Committee created over incidents among council members

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven City Council has discussed the next steps for an ad hoc committee that was formed to create a code of conduct for council members.

"We have been working on a code of conduct for how the council can relate to each other and get business done," City Manager Kate Hosier said Monday night.

Council Member Mary Hosley said the committee has met three times in 2024, and again on July 10, 2025 with the city attorney's office.

This committee's creation stemmed from a couple incidents that occurred during two previous city council meetings.

"(On) Jan. 16, 2024, the mayor broke the Robert's rules, and she insulted four of us and it was horrible," Council Member Joe Reeser recalled during Monday's meeting. "A year later, Jan. 16 oddly enough, (a) similar thing happened. That's breaking the rules of conduct, breaking the rules of Robert's rules."

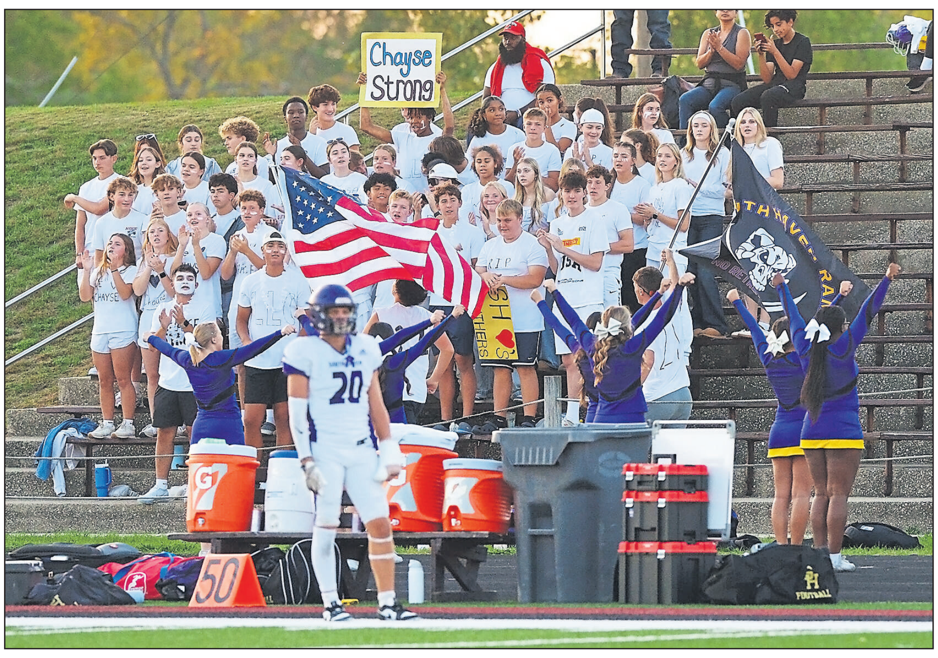
The incident that took place in 2024 referred to a statement that was made by Mayor Annie Brown regarding the nomination to appoint Hosley to the city's planning commission. Brown alleged it was a planned appointment because of a personal agenda by the council members.

The incident in 2025 referred to a heated discussion between council members when Brown brought up controversial language related to the LGBTQ+ community that was used in previous language for the short-term rental ordinance. During that meeting, Brown attempted to apologize to the community for the language used in the ordinance. Hosley commented that the controversial language was not included in her proposed ordinance draft.

Council Member George Sleeper, who is on the ad hoc committee, said

See **CONDUCT**, page A3

SOUTH HAVEN FOOTBALL WINS 39-0



RIGHT: South Haven fans wear white in remembrance of Chayse Ott during last week's game against Watervliet. **BELOW:** South Haven's Grayson Knox pulls in a reception over Watervliet's Cole Getz and scores a touchdown during last week's 39-0 victory.

Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff

South Haven's Quin Hayes looks for an opening against Watervliet's Dimetric White during last week's 39-0 win over the Panthers. Hearts were heavy going into the contest, as the Watervliet community is mourning the passing of senior football player and student Chayse Ott in a car crash.

South Haven Twp. approves plowing bid

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven Township trustees reviewed and approved a plowing bid this week from Elevate Landscape Co. for the upcoming winter season.

The board received two bids during Wednesday night's meeting, one from Elevate Landscape and another from Mareno and Sons.

"Elevate Landscape is who has done it for the last couple years and they sent us a quote," Township Clerk Brenda Bertorelli said. "And in the meantime, Mareno and Sons have been doing our yard work and so they submitted a quote. It's kind of comparing apples to oranges because Elevate gives us seasonally and Mareno will just charge us every time they come."

Elevate Landscape offered multiple rate options including a seasonal rate of $4,457 if paid in full after Nov. 1, seasonal rate of $4,234.15 if paid in full by Nov. 1, and a monthly rate of $1,114.25.

Mareno and Sons offered multiple rate options including $90 per visit for plowing the parking lot at 2 to 6 inches, additional $25 per visit for shoveling and salting sidewalks at 2 to 4 inches and $90 per application for salting the parking lot.

"I think we should stick with what we got," Board Member Phillip Poole said. "It's a set amount, we can budget that we know what it's going to be. We could get hammered if we got a bad winter by Mareno."

After a brief discussion, the board agreed to accept the bid from Elevate Landscape.

Apartment project

The board voted to amend an ordinance for the Lighthouse Bridge Pilot project.

The revision was introduced during the September board meeting.

The project is for a 52-unit apartment complex, scheduled to be built on 73rd Street.

The project is funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. However, when the plans were sent to them they asked for a section to be removed before they can move forward with the project.

The section identified for removal in the ordinance was for a service charge in lieu of taxes for dwelling units for low-income housing.

See **PLOWING**, page A3

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 126th Year

Support the Local Businesses Who Help Support Our Community!

Public input sought for Overton housing development

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Dwelling Place of Grand Rapids in collaboration with the City of South Haven recently announced a series of community engagement sessions focused on the proposed development of the Overton Property.

According to a news release, over the past several months the city has been working closely with Dwelling Place to explore the potential for creating affordable housing on the Overton site.

"As Dwelling Place prepares to submit formal plans to the City and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, they are seeking input and feedback from residents and stakeholders," the release stated.

All sessions are open to the public.

"These sessions are an important opportunity for neighbors to engage with the developer as their plans come to fruition," the release stated.

Each session will be offered twice; once in the afternoon and again in the evening. This is being done to help provide flexibility for attendees.

The sessions will take place at Northside Marina Clubhouse located at 148 Black River Street South Haven MI 49090.

Session times include:

■ Afternoon sessions: Noon to 1:30 p.m.

■ Evening sessions: 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Dates and topics include:

■ Oct. 20 – Community asset mapping and design feedback

■ Nov. 3 – Building and home design feedback

■ Nov. 17 – Final design and next steps

Surf Internet construction resumes

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Surf Internet construction recently shifted back to the south side of town near the lakeshore.

According to a news release, the work will take place north of the Black River between Water Street and Aylworth Avenue from Monroe Boulevard to Indiana Avenue in Service Area 11.

The construction will be contained within the road right-of-way for this project. At times, pedestrian traffic may be temporarily impeded due to utility spotting. Road traffic should be minimally impacted.

Restoration is expected to occur in tandem with construction, weather pending.

Some final restoration work may still occur in other areas, as well as work related to service installation by request.

For more information on future work areas and construction updates from Surf Internet go to surfinternet.com/construction/michigan/south-haven

For questions or concerns regarding construction, contact Bella Haberski at 269-637-0776 or bhaberski@southhavenmi.gov.

South Haven Indivisible to host second No Kings protest

By TRIBUNE STAFF

NO KINGS
NO FASCISTS
NO NAZIS
NO PSYCHO NARCISSIST
America Rejects Kings
HANDS
WE THE PEOPLE Are fed Up!
NO KINGS

Photo provided

Over 1,200 people attended the first NO KINGS Day held in June in South Haven.

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven Indivisible will host a No Kings Nationwide Protest on Oct. 18.

According to a news release, the protest will take place from 2 to 4 p.m. on Phoenix Road near First Congregational Church UCC, in South Haven, MI.

The event will begin with a rally in the church parking lot and then attendees are invited to line both sides of Phoenix Rd. east of Broadway in a peaceful protest.

"Peaceful, nonpartisan, pro-democracy advocates will line both sides of Phoenix Rd. east of Broadway to say to say NO to KINGS in the United States and yes to our nation's representative democracy with its built-in checks and balances," the release stated.

The rally will feature music and three speakers including Dr. Robert Naseef, Pastor David Frey and a special guest speaker that will be announced at a later time.

Naseef, a noted psychologist and father of an Autistic adult son, will address the impact of Medicaid cuts on families with special needs family members.

"My autistic son Tariq grew up and became an autistic adult.," Dr. Naseef said in the release. "He needs round-the-clock care because he is nonspeaking and does not understand danger. His care is 100 percent covered by Medicaid. In 2020, nearly 1.6 million autistic people were enrolled in Medicaid, two thirds of whom are children, and they and their families depend upon that care."

Pastor David Frey, pastor of the First Congregational Church, UCC in South Haven, will speak about the faith community's important role in defending religious freedom, democracy and human dignity.

"Real faith benefits everyone," Frey said in the release. "Good faith keeps us humble; it reminds us that we don't have all the answers and must necessarily walk and work with others in a quest for truth and goodness. Faith insists that a just and equitable society grows from trusting each other and the God of our devotion for our health and wholeness.

"By trusting and cherishing the grace that holds us up, giving us curiosity to meet strangers and courage to engage opponents who may or may not be enemies, we become trustworthy ourselves. Faith assures us that every step we take toward an open, honest, and charitable society is not taken in vain. In faith, I stand with you, for you, for us all; and by faith I demonstrate that you are not alone."

South Haven Indivisible founder Mary Jackson said in the release that it is important to be be on the front lines of protecting democracy and stopping the Hitler Nazi style playbook that is happening in the United States.

"We are united against kings in this country," Jackson said in the release. "President Trump has openly said he wants a third term and is already acting like a King and a dictator – seizing control of D.C., threatening other cities, and using federal forces against his own people. But the American people don't bow to kings. Together, we will peacefully mobilize, yet again, in huge numbers to reject this corruption and abuse of power – it's in our DNA as a country."

Cash and non-perishable food item donations will be collected for the First Congregational Church UCC food pantry during the event.

Attendees can use the side streets off of Phoenix Road to park due to the rally being held in the church parking lot.

"On October 18, we're going to show up in the largest peaceful protest in modern American history," Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of Indivisible Ezra Levin said in the release. "Millions will come together in more cities than ever to say collectively: no kings ever in America."

South Haven Indivisible is a chapter of the national grassroots Indivisible organization.

"Their mission is to organize to protect democracy through peaceful protests, activism and community activities," the release stated.

Over 2,100 No Kings demonstrations are scheduled to take place throughout the United States including over 68 in Michigan.

Over 1,200 people attended the first NO KINGS Day held in June in South Haven.

"Bring your signs and raise your voices in peaceful, nonviolent, protest," Jackson said in the release.

For more information on the nationwide protest, go to indivisible.org, nokings.org or mobilize.us.

For more information or to become involved with South Haven Indivisible, go to southhavenindivisible.org or on Facebook.

Visit us online for exclusive content and photos!
www.southhaventribune.net

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Dora the Explorer

Meet our Pet of the Week, Dora the Explorer!

Looking for an adventure buddy who also loves to snuggle? Dora the Explorer is your girl! This sweet pup is as gentle as they come and is happiest when she's curled up with her favorite humans. Dora does wonderfully with kids and other dogs, making her the perfect fit for a family looking to add some extra love (and cuddles!) to their home. With her affectionate nature and happy spirit, Dora is ready to explore life's adventures right by your side. Dora is spayed, microchipped, vaccinated and heartworm negative. To submit an adoption application visit al-van.org/adopt

PUMPKIN PAINTING

Put on your best costume and join us on October 26th from noon to 2pm for a festive fall afternoon at Al-Van Humane Society! Our Pumpkin Painting event is fun for all ages, with everything you need to create your own spooky or silly masterpiece. While you're here, snap a photo in our Halloween-themed photo booth, enjoy some treats, and visit some of our adoptable pets for a little extra furry fun. A $5 donation is suggested (but not required), and every dollar helps us care for the animals who call Al-Van home. Come celebrate the season, get creative, and support pets in need. It's a Halloween event you won't want to miss!

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST

Purina dry kitten food and KMR (kitten milk replacer)

CAST YOUR VOTE!

Our Annual Best Of South Haven contest is happening here!

Starting on October 1,
write in your votes for dozens of categories.
Tell us your favorite local South Haven businesses.

Vote through October 15th

Go to www.southhaventribune.com and click the Best Of link.

South Haven Tribune

Winners will be announced on Sunday, November 16 in our *"Best of South Haven"* special section.

BEST BANK
BEST BAR
BEST BAKERY
BEST AUTO REPAIR

Art exhibition explores memory and identity

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Center for the Arts recently opened the annual juried exhibition "The Ghosts that Linger."

According to a news release the exhibition explores how objects and places become repositories of memory and meaning and was juried by multidisciplinary artist Shaina Kasztelan.

"Kasztelan crafted a national call that asked artists to engage in themes of nostalgia, memory and identity," the release stated.

Ninety artists from all over the country submitted a total of 156 works from which Kasztelan selected the 36 pieces currently exhibited at the center for the arts.

Detroit artist, Kasztelan recently visited the South Haven Center for the Arts to judge the selected works to present a first, second and third place award, plus three honorable mentions.

Annie Hutchins from Utica, Miss. was awarded first place for her piece "Coming Home (I know I can never go back)," composed of screen prints on a quilt of repurposed fabrics including baby blankets, woven blanket, and bed sheets.

New York artist Ronald Gonzalez was awarded second place for his piece that showed two miniature chairs, only inches tall, made from found objects and detritus materials by Johnson City.

Kyle Anderson, one of five west Michigan artists in the exhibition was awarded third place for his oil painting "W.A.I.T."

The three honorable mentions included: "Little Robber Girl" by Karla Rydrych, "Hoarding Island" by Danielle Pagano and "Moms Memory Box" by Patrick Miceli.

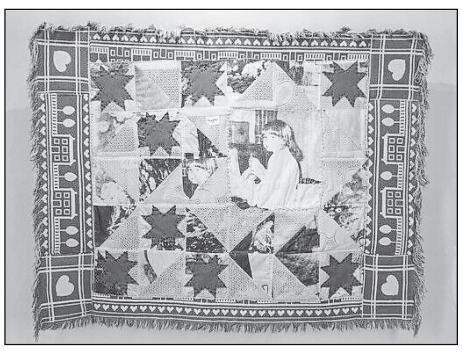
Kasztelan received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the College for Creative Studies in 2012 and an Master of Fine Arts from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2024.

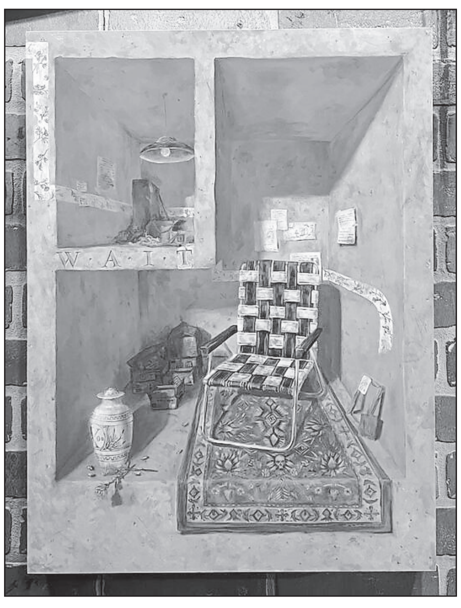
Her work has been exhibited in many places including The Detroit Institute of Arts, the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit and the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities.

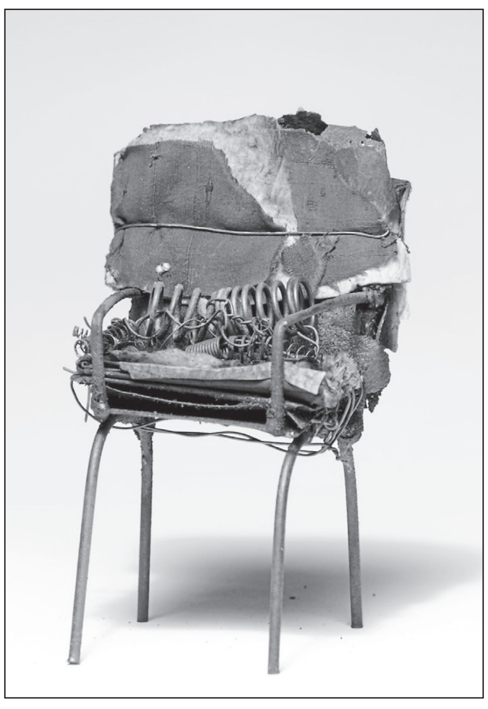
National Juried Exhibition
The Ghosts that Linger
Juried by
Shaina Kasztelan

Photos provided

Artist and exhibition judge Shaina Kasztelan stands next to the sculpture "Movement in the Walls I," by Chicago artist Elise Bagnoli as part of the South Haven Center for the Arts new exhibition.







ABOVE: Second place was awarded to New York artist Ronald Gonzalez for his piece that showed two miniature chairs made from found objects. **TOP LEFT:** First Place winning piece of "The Ghosts that Linger" art exhibition entitled "Coming Home (I know I can never go back)" by Annie Hutchins. **LEFT:** West Michigan artists Kyle Anderson was awarded third place for his oil painting "W.A.I.T." in the exhibition.

"The Ghosts that Linger" will be on exhibit through Nov. 8.

The South Haven Center for the Arts, located at 600 Phoenix Street, South Haven, Michigan, is free and open to the public.

The center is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursday.

For more information go to southhavenarts.org or southhavenarts on Facebook and Instagram.

To contact the center directly, email info@southhavenarts.org or call 269-637-1041

Cecil Wilson to present Pokagon Band history and traditions

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Michigan Maritime Museum will host a special lecture entitled "Ancestral Waters: The Pokagon Band and Their Homelands" presented by Cecil Wilson.

According to a news release, the presentation will take place at 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 15.

"Since time immemorial, the Pokagon Band people have called the Great Lakes their home, with water serving as a sacred source that has shaped both their past and their future," the release stated. "In this engaging lecture, Wilson will share the history of his people, their enduring connection to the lands and waters of the region and the ways they have carried their traditions forward to the present day."

Wilson is an enrolled citizen of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi and a member of the Turtle Clan. His work focuses on preserving cultural landscapes, histories and living stories of his people.

"From government-to-government dialogue to historical research and oral storytelling, Wilson's efforts highlight the resilience, sovereignty and ongoing cultural revitalization of the Pokagon Band," the release stated. "His message affirms that the Pokagon people are not only a part of history, but a thriving, present and enduring Nation with a future deeply connected to land and water."

This program is part of "Whispers Across the Water," the museum's year-long lecture series that highlights the contributions of minority communities to Great Lakes maritime history and heritage.

Tickets are free for museum members, $10 for non-members and can be purchased online by phone or in person.

Doors open at 6 p.m.

"The Whispers Across the Water series is made possible thanks to the generous support of the Nielsen-Wells Grant Fund and Mike and Susan Smith," the release stated.

South Haven event to highlight Lake View Cemetery

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Historical Association of South Haven will host Gary Swain, president of the Friends of Kalamazoo Historic Cemeteries, who will present a program on Lake View Cemetery.

According to a news release, the presentation will take place at 7 p.m. on Oct. 15 and be focused on the importance of maintenance, restoration and preservation.

"South Haven's Lake View Cemetery is one of the most scenic and interesting cemeteries in southwest Michigan," the release stated. "Many of our earliest pioneers and entrepreneurs are interred here and it is a treasure trove of history and information."

Since retiring in 2010, Swain has served on a number of boards in the Kalamazoo area. He was the chairman of the statue committee for the Kalamazoo Abraham Lincoln Institute and is past commander of the Department of Michigan, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

"Swain is a frequent lecturer on the Civil War, genealogy and cemetery preservation and has devoted countless hours as a volunteer with historical and preservation groups," the release stated.

The program is free and will take place at the Hartman School headquarters located at 355 Hubbard St.

CONDUCT

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he felt this project did not need to be rushed to get done.

"Well, if you go back to the genesis of this committee, I think overall, we've gone almost two years and not really had similar problems to what caused the formation of this committee," Sleeper said. "I don't feel a need to rush through and get this done anytime soon because it seems like we've kind of fixed ourselves, but I'll leave it up to the rest of the council, since I'll be leaving, unfortunately."

Hosley said some of the issues had been resolved, but others have not.

"The next steps is these are the things that we have addressed and how quickly should they be brought forward?" Hosley said. "Glossing over some of the key things we did, allows easily just saying we'll wait, because we self-corrected, but we haven't. We haven't completely self-corrected."

Reeser said he was concerned that if the code of conduct is not established soon, it could impact future city councils.

"This has got to be fixed and the only way to fix it is to have this code of conduct committee and get it done sooner," Reeser said.

The city council asked Hosier to schedule a time in November for the committee to meet before bringing the draft code of conduct back for city council approval.

No decisions or motions were made at the time of Monday's meeting.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

PLOWING

From page A1

Other items

The board set a public hearing for the 2026 proposed budget to take place on Nov. 12.

The board approved an amendment to the zoning ordinance to rezone the property at 73rd $^1/_2$ Street from community service commercial to high-density residential planned unit development.

The plan for the property is to have 45 dwelling units, with a variety of amenities including pickleball courts, basketball courts and a pool.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

SWMI housing market hits high point in August

By TONY WITTKOWSKI
For the Tribune

Southwest Michigan's housing market sales in August surpassed this year's previous apex.

According to a report from the Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors, the month of August also marked the first time in 2025 when sales were more than 300 homes sold.

"Sellers benefited from higher selling prices in August compared to August 2024. Selling prices reached their highest level compared to a year ago and for the last 20 years in the year-over-year comparison," said Luke Jeffries, association executive of the Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors. "The number of houses sold in August dropped 5 percent to 314 from 329 in August 2024. Year-to-date, the number of houses sold increased 1 percent."

The inventory of houses for sale grew by 4 percent since August 2024 – 1,015 vs. 973. At the end of August, there was a 6.2-month supply of houses. Jeffries said this level increased from the six-month supply available in August 2024. For comparison, in August 2010, there were 3,757 houses for sale.

In August 2025, the average selling price rose by 8 percent to $417,616 from $387,911 in August 2024 – but did not reach the average selling price of $424,997 in July 2025. In 2025, June holds the record for the highest average selling price at $430,096. Year-to-date, the average selling price increased by 14 percent.

The median selling price in August 2025 increased 7 percent to $320,000 from $300,000 in August 2024. Year-to-date, the median selling price rose 7 percent to $295,000 from $275,000 in August 2024.

The Freddie Mac mortgage rate in August dropped to 5.69, down from 6.72 in July for a 30-year conventional mortgage. A year ago, the rate was 6.35.

In August, the total dollar volume for the month compared to the same period last year increased by 3 percent. The year-to-date total dollar volume jumped by 15 percent.

The number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions remained at 1 percent in August, with two houses.

Across the country

Existing-home sales remained essentially the same in August, ticking down by 0.2 percent from July, according to the National Association of Realtors Existing-Home Sales Report.

The report provides details on the real estate ecosystem, including agents, homebuyers and sellers, with data on the level of home sales, price and inventory.

Month-over-month sales increased in the Midwest and West, and fell in the Northeast and South. Year-over-year, sales rose in the Midwest and South, and fell in the Northeast and West.

Total existing-home sales decreased 0.2 percent in total sales month-over-month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4 million in August. Year-over-year sales have increased 1.8 percent.

"Home sales have been sluggish over the past few years due to elevated mortgage rates and limited inventory," said NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun. "However, mortgage rates are declining, and more inventory is coming to the market, which should boost sales in the coming months."

The total housing inventory, at 1.53 million units, was down 1.3 percent from July and up 11.7 percent from August 2024. The current inventory is at a 4.6-month supply, which did not change from July.

"Record-high housing wealth and a record-high stock market will help current homeowners trade up and benefit the upper end of the market. However, sales of affordable homes are constrained by the lack of inventory," Yun said. "The Midwest was the best-performing region last month, primarily due to relatively affordable market conditions. The median home price in the Midwest is 22 percent below the national median price."

The median existing-home price for all housing types in August was $422,600, up 0.2 percent from one year ago – the 26th consecutive month of year-over-year price increases.

In the Midwest, existing-home sales increased 2.1 percent month-over-month to an annual rate of 960,000, up 3.2 percent year-over-year. The median price in the Midwest was $333,500, up 4.5 percent from August 2024.

Area Agency on Aging to offer help with Medicare enrollment

By TRIBUNE STAFF

A group of volunteer counselors will be available to help the tri-county area during the Medicare Open Enrollment, which runs from Oct. 15 to Dec. 7.

According to a news release, the State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) through Area Agency on Aging is here to assist Medicare beneficiaries in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties understand their health benefits.

"If you or a family member are over 65 or otherwise eligible for Medicare, now is the time to review your coverage and benefits so you can make informed decisions about your plan for the coming year," Program Supervisor Mistelle Lanko said in the release.

Medicare Open Enrollment provides an opportunity to understand what changes can be made to a person's current coverage, review current Medicare health and drug plans and review changes to the program.

Insurance companies can make changes to Medicare plans each year, which can impact out-of-pocket costs. This can include monthly premiums, deductibles, drug costs and provider or pharmacy copays.

Last year, the Region IV Area Agency on Aging served 1,458 clients with more than 1,200 hours of health benefits counseling, saving consumers a total of $1.3 million. Lanko said that's an average of about $891 per person in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties.

"SHIP counselors are highly trained, unbiased volunteers who will help you sort through the noise insurance companies are making during Open Enrollment and help you choose the right plans for you," Lanko said in the release.

For general Medicare information, or to find the closest SHIP counseling site, visit www.AreaAgencyonAging.org/medicare-medicaid.

For more information, people can call the info line for Aging & Disability at 800-654-2810.

South Haven Tribune CLASSIFIEDS

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
Van Buren COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2025 1158 DE
Hon. Susan Metzger

Court address
212 Paw Paw St, Ste 220 Paw Paw, MI 49079
Court telephone no.
269-657-8225

Estate of:
James Rodney Peck, **Deceased**
Date of birth:10/31/1955

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, James Rodney Peck, died 09/02/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Heidi Lynn Peck, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 Paw Paw St, Ste 220 Paw Paw, MI 49079 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Staci L. Salisbury P79632
Attorney name Bar no.
9848 Portage Road
Address
Portage, MI 49002
City, state, zip
269-256-5960
Telephone

Heidi Lynn Peck
Personal representative
10301 Sprinkle Road
Address
Vicksburg, MI 49097
City, state, zip
269-762-2412
Telephone

0900 LEGALS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Public Accuracy Test for the November 4, 2025, Election will be held on **Wednesday, October 15th at 2:00 PM at the Casco Township Hall; 7104 107th Ave. South Haven, MI 49090.**

The Public Accuracy Test is conducted to demonstrate that the program and the tabulators that will be used in the Election have been prepared in accordance with the law.

Rachel Ridley, Casco Twp Clerk

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PUBLIC/LEGAL NOTICES

To place a public notice, please send your requests to **legals@pmginmi.com.**

Please allow 48 hours to process, larger legals may need at least four business days.

CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

On Monday, October 27, 2025, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for the City of South Haven will hear public comments related to the request(s) below. The public hearing(s) will be held at 7:00 PM at City Hall, 539 Phoenix St, South Haven, concerning the following:

1. 50 North Shore Drive – Nonuse/Dimensional Variances
Spoelstra Pools, on behalf of Riverside Condominiums, has applied for nonuse/dimensional variances seeking relief from Zoning Ordinance Section 2111 to permit an accessory structure in a front yard, and Section 2112 to permit a swimming pool in a front yard at 50 North Shore Drive. The application is related to the replacement of existing structures. The referenced address is located at the southeast corner of North Shore Drive and South Street.

2. 90 Avery Street – Nonuse/Dimensional Variances
Mr. Randy Falconer has applied for a nonuse/dimensional variance seeking relief from Zoning Ordinance Section 403.03 regarding building height to permit the installation of railings on the widow's watch of the existing dwelling unit. The requested building height is 37.7 ft. The parcel number for the referenced address is 80-53-802-001-01.

3. 30 Delaware Court – Nonuse/Dimensional Variances
Ms. Mary Connett has applied for a nonuse/dimensional variance seeking relief from Zoning Ordinance Section 403.01 regarding rear yard setbacks to construct an addition to the existing single-family dwelling. The requested rear yard setback is 23 ft 5 in. The parcel number for the referenced address is 80-53-304-010-00.

Supporting documentation is available for review at the Building Services office, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090. Written comments may be submitted in lieu of or in addition to a personal appearance. Written comments must be received no later than 12 p.m. (noon) on Monday, October 27, 2025. Written comments should be addressed to the ZBA and must be submitted to the Zoning Administrator at kdissette@southhavenmi.gov or via postal mail addressed to the ZBA and sent to 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090.

Individuals requesting reasonable accommodation for impairments or disabilities should contact the City Clerk no later than five days prior to the public hearing in person at City Hall, at 269-637-0750, or at mkiker@southhavenmi.gov.

Kelly Getman-Dissette
Zoning Administrator
(269) 637-0760 kdissette@southhavenmi.gov

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The CLASSIFIEDS

New weight limit set for bridge in Antwerp Township

By TRIBUNE STAFF

LAWRENCE — The Van Buren County Road Commission recently announced the implementation of a new weight limit on the bridge that carries County Road 657 over the east branch of the Paw Paw River, located between 60th Avenue and 62nd Avenue in Antwerp Township.

According to a news release, vehicles crossing the bridge must not exceed 31 tons and will take effect on Oct. 17.

The signs indicating the new limit have been posted.

"This bridge supports approximately 2,200 to 2,500 vehicles daily," Highway Engineer Barry Anttila said in the release. "While most passenger vehicles won't be affected, heavier vehicles must comply with the new limit."

This change follows a routine inspection that revealed deterioration in the bridge deck.

"We're actively working on design and engineering plans to replace the bridge," Anttila said. "In the meantime, the weight restriction will help reduce stress on the structure and maintain safe travel."

The estimated cost to replace the bridge is $850,000, which will be funded through the road commission's general funds and/or county-wide road millage funds.

"This is an unexpected challenge for our 2026 budget," Managing Director Bret Witkowski said in the release. "But this is a high-traffic area, and closing the bridge isn't a viable option. We're committed to making the necessary budget adjustments to move this project forward."

The bridge is on a primary road and not eligible for federal or state funding in its current form. However, the planned replacement will increase the bridge's size, making it eligible for future grant opportunities.

"The Van Buren County Road Commission remains dedicated to improving local infrastructure to save lives, time and money," the release stated.

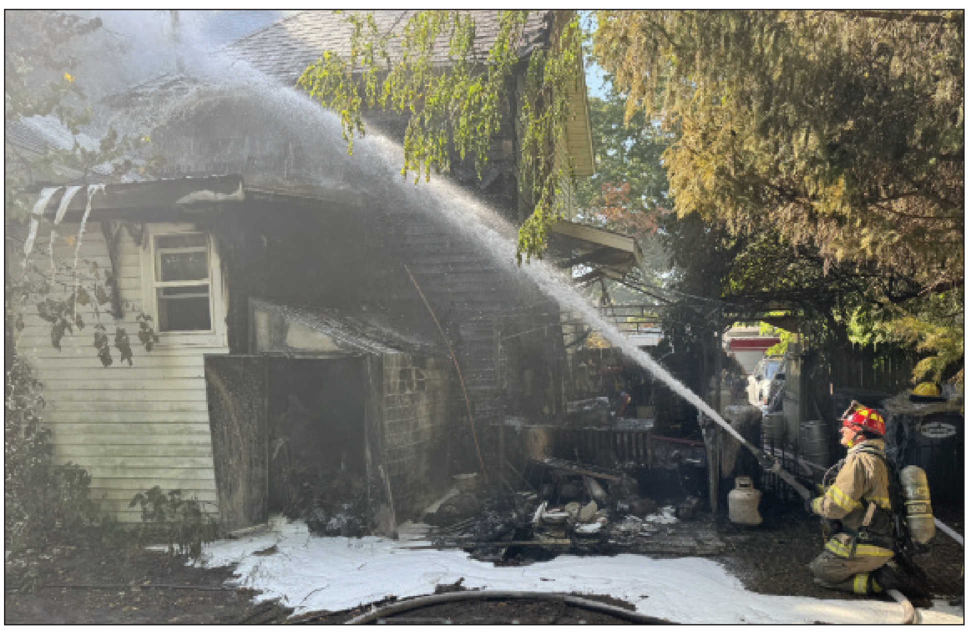

Photo provided / Tom Renner

A firefighter works to contain a fire at the back of a residence in the 500 block of School Street on Monday afternoon in South Haven.

No one harmed in SH fire

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Emergency Services quickly contained a fire at the back of a residence in the 500 block of School Street on Monday afternoon.

According to a news release, units responded at 2:20 p.m. Monday when a passersby reported a fire consuming a gazebo close to the residence in South Haven.

"It was a very dangerous situation for firefighters because of downed power lines and at least one burning propane tank," SHAES Deputy Chief Keith Bierhalter said in the release.

SHAES extinguished the fire with mutual aid assistance from the Bangor and Covert fire departments.

Most of the fire damage was to the rear exterior, Bierhalter said.

The occupants were safely evacuated from the residence, while emergency responders remained on scene until 5 p.m. Monday.

Van Buren County Road Commission hosts employee celebration

By TRIBUNE STAFF

LAWRENCE — The Van Buren County Road Commission recently hosted its Annual Employee Appreciation Day and Snowplow Road-eo.

According to a news release, the event is designed to celebrate the staff and showcase the skills and expertise of road maintenance employees, mechanics and apprentices.

During the Snowplow Road-eo, drivers navigated an obstacle course simulating real-world snowplowing conditions. Participants were timed and scored based on accuracy, safety and speed, earning points for their performance.

Additional points were awarded through participation in educational sessions and a hands-on diagnostic exam involving a truck, further emphasizing the importance of technical knowledge and continuous learning.

"This event is more than a competition – it's a celebration of the dedication, skill and pride our employees bring to their work every day," Managing Director Bret Witkowski said in the release. "Their commitment to keeping our roads safe, especially during Michigan's harsh winters, is the backbone of our community's mobility and safety."

The top competitors included:

- First Place: David Stafinski
- Second Place: Randy Moser
- Third Place: Austin Hammond

The event also honored long-standing employees for their years of service including:

- Tim Nicholas, road maintenance employee – 40 Years
- Larry Click, road maintenance employee – 25 Years
- John Noffke, road maintenance employee – 25 Years

"The Van Buren County Road Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to excellence in winter road maintenance and public safety," The release stated. "The Annual Road-eo and Employee Appreciation Day serve as a meaningful tribute to the hardworking individuals who keep our roads safe and accessible throughout the year."

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Foundry Hall
Scott Club Concert Series
Xavier Davis
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Enjoy an hour-long program "An Afternoon of Jazz" by this master musician, teacher, bandleader & recording artist.
In person at Scott Club:
RSVP by Oct 17 (required) to: info@scottclub.org
Livestream: Scott Club Facebook page &
Foundry Hall Twitch channel: https://www.twitch.tv/foundryhall
Concert is a collaboration between Scott Club & Foundry Hall.
Reception will follow concert. Funded in part by Holtec-Palisades.
HOLTEC PALISADES
scottclub.org
South Haven Scott Club
652 Phoenix Street
foundryhall.org

SOUTH HAVEN COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

South Haven Center for the Arts: "Altered Consumerism" exhibition from Aug. 8 through Sept. 20.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1-4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Elkenburg Park

Photo provided

The South Haven Garden Club recently donated and placed garden beds at Elkenburg Park which includes a Serviceberry tree and a natural wood slab bench.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time on 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays.

South Haven Farm Market: Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. through October at Huron Street Pavilion.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lake Arvesta: Summer at the pasture concert every Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: New Exhibit – "The Adventures of Liberty Hyde Bailey – Chicago: 1872." Available during museum hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: "The Gift of Mnoomin" by Brittany Luby and Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley Storywalk. Available from Oct. 1 through 31.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge – Chicago Scoring: noon on Tuesdays. Lakeside Entertainment, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

Bridge – Duplicate Scoring: 1 pm on Wednesdays. Lakeside Entertainment, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

South Haven Center for the Arts: "The Ghost that Linger" art exhibition available through Nov. 8.

October

12 – First Congregational UCC: Fall Concert Series featuring Serita's Black Rose Duo at 3 p.m.

13 – South Haven Memorial Library: Author event with Michigan author Mark Love at 6 p.m. Includes a discussion on his books, writing process, characters and a book signing.

13 – South Haven Garden Club: Making herbal smudges at First Congregational Church.

14 – Rotary Club: South Haven Public Schools Superintendent Ana Aleman-Putman will present and Dene Hadden is program chair.

14 – South Haven Memorial Library: South haven Strummers from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Bring your own ukulele.

14 – Swimming: Girls varsity against Plainwell at 6 p.m.

15 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

15 – Michigan Maritime Museum: Lecture series presentation "Ancestral Waters: The Pokagon Band and Their Homelands" at 6:30 p.m.

15 – Historical Association of South Haven: Lake View Cemetery presentation by Gary Swain at 7 p.m. at the Hartman School headquarters.

16 – Volleyball: Girls middle school against Bridgeman at 5:30 p.m.

16 – South Haven Speaker Series: Dr. Marci Rosselle-McCarthy will present a lecture on the world's economy.

17 – Football: Boys varsity against Allegan at 7 p.m. at Ratcliffe Field.

17 – South Haven Public Schools: Homecoming Golf Cart Parade at 5:30 p.m. Carts will line up at Black River Book Store.

17 – South Haven Memorial Library: Messy play Fridays for preschoolers from 11 a.m. -noon.

18 – South Haven Memorial Library: Halloween Party from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

18 – South Haven Indivisible: No Kings protest from 2 to 4 p.m. at First Congregational UCC.

18 – Indivisible Paw Paw: No Kings protest from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Maple Lake Amphitheatre.

19 – Scott Club: Jazz Pianist Xavier Davis presents "An Afternoon of Jazz." Free concert, RSVP required.

20 – Volleyball: Girls middle school against Saugatuck at 5:30 p.m.

21 – Rotary Club: Evening meeting at the American Legion beginning at 5 p.m. Managing Director of the Van Buren County Road Commission Bret Witowski will present and Dan Thompson is the program chair.

24 – Football: Boys varsity against Galesburg-Augusta at 7 p.m. at Ratcliffe Field.

24 – South Haven Memorial Library: South Haven Writers read-around. New writers welcome from 1 to 4 p.m.

25 – South Haven Memorial Library: Astronomy Club at 11 a.m. Registration is recommended.

26 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Pumpkin Boo-Walk starting at 6:45 p.m.

28 – South Haven Young Professionals: Coffee Connections from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. at The Flying Saucer.

28 – Rotary Club: Club Assembly and Rotary President Amy Nichols to present.

29 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

30 – South Haven Tri-M Music Honor Society: Halloween Carnival rom 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the South Haven High School gym.

30 – First Baptist Church: Pumpkinfest from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on the gym. Free event with games, activities and candy.

31 – Goody's Wash N' Go: Trunk or Treat from 4 to 6 p.m.

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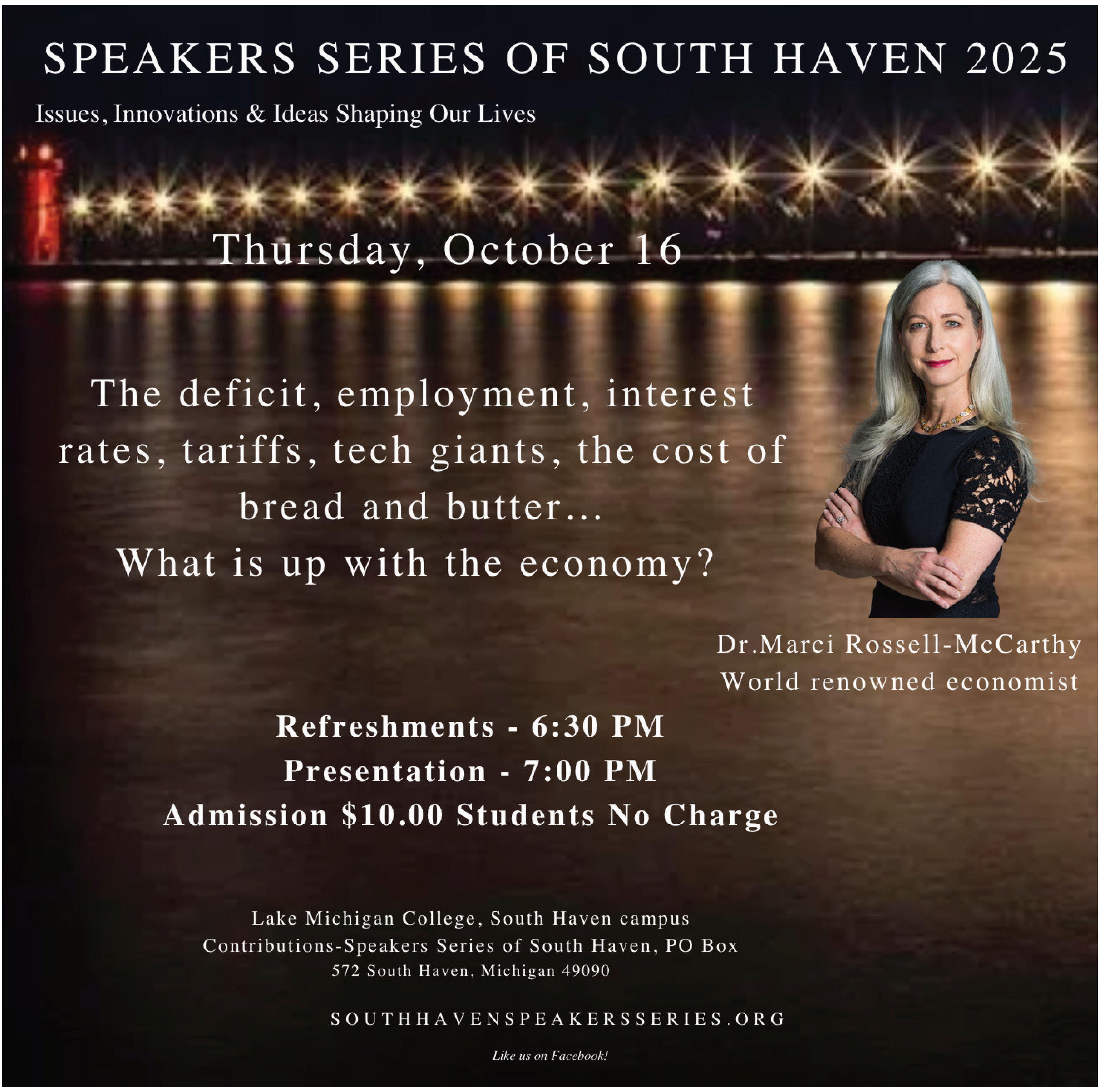
SPEAKERS SERIES OF SOUTH HAVEN 2025

Issues, Innovations & Ideas Shaping Our Lives

Thursday, October 16

The deficit, employment, interest rates, tariffs, tech giants, the cost of bread and butter...
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Dr.Marci Rossell-McCarthy
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Refreshments - 6:30 PM
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FOCUS

Samuel Long / The Pittsburgh Post Gazette / TNS

Three tape decks sit in the Attic in Millvale on Sept. 3.

REWINDING HISTORY

Why cassettes are making a comeback

By SAMUEL LONG
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

PITTSBURGH — Though Gabriel Dominic-Dunlap didn't grow up with cassettes, he's now a collector who can be seen sporting a personal tape player.

The 20-year-old Duquesne University student only discovered an enthusiasm for the format, which hit peak popularity in the 1980s, within the past few months. He carries tapes from his small collection with him to listen on his way to class and while walking around town.

"The retro aspect is kind of cool, but it's definitely just the feeling of being able to take out a cassette album, flipping it around and the sound of it closing in," Dominic-Dunlap said. "You hear the mechanisms turning when you first play it and fall in love with it."

Similar to the resurgence of vinyl records – though to a lesser degree, sales-wise – the two-spooled, magnetic cassette tape hasn't quite stayed in the past. Though a more portable option than vinyl, tapes are imperfect – degrading with time and, even when new, blanketing music with a warm hiss.

And alongside current artists including Taylor Swift and Bad Bunny releasing new music on cassette, some Pittsburgh record store owners are seeing an uptick in interest in the format. Their theories as to why range from user sentimentality to a desire, in this age of streaming, to again be able to physically hold music that's actually owned.

The Attic in Millvale recently started offering a collection of tapes, which now fills two floor-to-ceiling shelves. Enough are being sold to make their curation worth it, said 51-year-old owner Fred Bohn Jr., of Shaler.

Noticing heightened interest for the format around a year ago, Bohn said the store has since been able to buy entire cassette collections and resell them at a small profit.

"It was just a huge response. People started coming out of the woodwork just to see what cassettes we had," Bohn said.

Data show that Bohn isn't the only person seeing an increase in cassette sales and interest.

Sales increased by 28 percent in 2022, per music industry tracker Luminate, with 440,000 cassettes sold, up from 343,000 the year prior. It's a small slice, with total sales of physical albums – cassettes, CDs and vinyl – at 79.9 million in 2022.

The top album of 2024 on cassette, according to Luminate, was Taylor Swift's new "The Tortured Poets Department," with 25,000 sold. Not far behind, with 23,000 sold, was "Guardians of the Galaxy: Awesome Mix Vol. 1," originally released in 2014.

Other big-name music artists and labels are also selling cassettes. On Amazon, you can order Sabrina Carpenter's most recent album "Man's Best Friend," released in late August, on cassette for $15.97. A new tape of Nirvana's "Nevermind" is available for a similar price. You can even order the soundtrack for the popular video game Minecraft, "Volume Alpha," on the format.

But there are plenty of used cassettes available as well. And for fans of the format who are wanting to make their own mixtapes or physical audio journals, Jerry's Records in Squirrel Hill also sells blank cassettes.

Used cassettes make up a chunk of Eric Stevens' collection; the Greenfield resident has kept the format close his entire life.

Stevens, who runs a cassette tape-based record label called Michi Tapes, grew up with cassettes through the 1990s and early 2000s, listening to the likes of "(What's the Story) Morning Glory?" by Oasis and "Harvest Moon" by Neil Young. As an eighth grader at Saint Marys Area Middle School, he remembers queueing up a cassette of "Dazed and Confused" by Led Zeppelin for a music analysis presentation.

At 34, he boasts a collection of nearly 300 tapes, around 100 of which are 90-minute mixtapes recorded from the radio. The other 200 are made up of local bands, some recorded through his Michi Tapes label, in addition to other genres such as jazz and classical.

"I feel like the sliding scale of disintegration of sound is a little more subtle. It feels like just the highs get shaved off, but you can still listen to a tape that's aging and being worn over the years," Stevens said. "Obviously, it's not as good as if it's a fresh tape or something, but I think as far as listenability it's a little smoother even if it's messed up."

Chris Grauzer, a 42-year-old Swissvale resident who owns Jerry's Records, hasn't quite been able to pin down the reason behind this reigniting of cassette culture. He said people his age seem to be interested in VHS tapes because of nostalgia, and the same could apply to an increase in a passion for cassettes.

But the demographic of cassette tape customers he's used to seeing skews even younger.

"I'm seeing 20-year-olds, 25-year-olds, people that were born after 2000 that are into cassettes," Grauzer said. "And that's wild to me, because it's clearly not a nostalgia thing. They didn't grow up with them."

Bohn's cassette customers, he said, similarly tend to be in their early 20s.

Perhaps the younger generations are more interested in formats that are tangible, that they can hold, Grauzer said. He theorized that some may be "fed up" with the digital world and streaming services that provide access to artists' music – rather than the ability to own it.

Dominic-Dunlap said he enjoys that physical aspect of cassettes, and that once he purchases the music he owns it forever.

"More and more it seems like you gotta buy a subscription of this or pay for a monthly or yearly subscription of that just to own what you paid for, for a limited amount of time," he explained. "That's why a lot of people are going back to physical media."

There's also the presence of cassette culture in popular media to consider, Grauzer said. In "Guardians of the Galaxy" (2014), main character Peter Quill (played by Chris Pratt) wears a Sony Walkman TPS-L2 – the original Sony cassette player released in 1979 – on his hip and sports orange-padded headphones.

Grauzer saw a surge of people coming into Jerry's asking about cassettes in relation to the movie, and a similar spike in interest followed the release of "Stranger Things" Season 4 in 2022. In that series, Max Mayfield (Sadie Sink) wears a Sony Walkman WM-8 and listens to Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill." The song protected her from succumbing to the main antagonist, culminating in an epic scene with an orchestral rendition of the song.

The vinyl of the LP with "Running Up That Hill," on Kate Bush's fifth studio album "Hounds of Love" (1985), surged in price to over $100, Grauzer recalled.

Online prices for the Sony Walkman WM-8 also increased, and many used models on eBay are currently listed for hundreds of dollars.

"If I had a nickel for every time someone asked me for 'Running Up That Hill,' I'd be a rich man," Grauzer said.

Dominic-Dunlap said finding his player was a difficult process. He originally looked into buying an old Sony Walkman but couldn't justify the cost. So he took to an online hunt, and ended up with an RTM Industries player.

"There aren't enough players. We have none currently," Grauzer said.

There are some small companies making new versions of portable cassette players, including Retrospekt in Milwaukee, with its CP-81 model, and We Are Rewind in Paris. There are units available on Amazon for between $30 and $60, and stereo cassette decks available for between $150 and $400. Dominic-Dunlap bought his cassette player from France-based Recording the Masters, an analog audio company.

Secondhand players, however, are usually broken and need to be repaired, Bohn said.

Due to the cost of those repairs, Galaxie Electronics owner Vince Bomba said he'll no longer work on older cassette decks or portable players.

A non-functional cassette deck or portable player that may have been purchased for around $20 can quickly turn into a fix costing hundreds of dollars, due to mechanical issues and the availability of parts, Bomba said.

Some sellers on eBay will 3D print parts, but those versions often don't last long either, said Bomba.

Still, at Galaxie Electronics, which is housed in the same building as Jerry's Records, still stocks the Sony TC-WE305 cassette deck on its shelves, which was released in the mid-1990s.

"They're easy to get parts for, so the die-hard cassette people, I try to keep them on the shelf for those guys," Bomba said.

Retrospekt sells refurbished secondhand portable cassette players, including the iconic Walkman. Prices for these players range from $119 for a Panasonic player to $999 for the Sony Walkman TPS-L2 used in "Guardians of the Galaxy."

The ability to repair these players is dependent on their condition, said owner Adam Fuerst. Retrospekt works with manufacturers to order new parts for certain units after analyzing specifications and determining what needs to be fixed.

"What I like about cassettes in particular is the lack of what it is. It's not perfect," he said. "And the imperfection is what makes it appealing in some ways because everything's artificially perfect now."

He compared buying into cassette culture to buying a "worn and lived in" house, where accidents like a pet scratching the doors won't take away from the building's established charm.

"It's just a much more casual listening experience, and it feels like you can finally take a breath and just enjoy the music and not worry about your child coming up to the table and bumping it and scratching your record that you spent $60 on," Fuerst said.

FOCUS

Eileen T. Meslar / Chicago Tribune / TNS

Jesus M. puts a ball of cookie dough on a baking sheet with an ice cream scoop at Gateway to Learning in Lincoln Square on Sept. 9.

Paola P., left, puts sprinkles on cookies as James G. dips the cookies in chocolate at Gateway to Learning in Lincoln Square on Sept. 9.

Jesus M., left, and Donna M. make balls of cookie dough with an ice cream scoop before putting them on a baking sheet at Gateway to Learning in Lincoln Square on Sept. 9.

Doing it my way

How programs help build confidence in the kitchen for those with disabilities

By NICOLE SCHNITZLER
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

CHICAGO — On a recent Sunday, I stood in the kitchen with my brother Daniel, watching as he cracked the fifth and final egg into a bowl – the blue bowl, his favorite for making scrambled eggs. He reached for the fork to whisk them, humming, clicking his tongue and smiling widely. At 49 years old, Daniel has enjoyed eggs for a while – ever since our time on a Wisconsin farm as kids, when we made frequent visits to our next-door neighbors, "Grandma" Jeanette and "Grandpa" Chester, dairy farmers who sent us home with a fresh dozen every week.

Our parents learned of my brother's autism when he was 3 years old, and as he grew, our family watched Daniel become who he is: someone who adores the beach and the Beatles, thrives on being on-the-go, and, like the rest of his family, loves food.

Daniel poured the eggs into the skillet and reached for the spatula I handed him, scrambling the yellow of the yolks; singing the refrain from "Home" by Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros. After weeks of practice, I now let Daniel lead the charge on this recipe, but I stay close, concerned for his safety around the heat. It's why we cook with an electric skillet as opposed to an open flame, the pan's temperature dial and larger dimensions proving easier for Daniel to manage.

I am not alone in considering modifications in the kitchen – and beyond – for a loved one with a disability. In 1988, Congress passed the Assistive Technology Act, a law issuing federal funding to states to help increase access to assistive technology devices and services for individuals with disabilities.

In 1989, the Illinois Assistive Technology Program began. Its mission is to provide individuals living with disabilities and health conditions greater access to assistive technology devices and services, enhancing their independence and participation in daily life. IATP is based in Springfield and serves people throughout Illinois.

"We realize that not everybody with a disability can make the drive to us, and so we come to them," says Jessica Schuyler-Weir, director of training. "We want to welcome anybody who wants to learn about how assistive technology can help them."

The team works with individuals, their families and their caregivers to determine the best way, be it a site or home visit, for the individual to engage with IATP's core programs. These include a Device Loan Library, a Demonstration Center (featuring demonstrations of thousands of devices), and a Reuse Program, offering gently used and new assistive technology devices and durable medical equipment to those who would otherwise be unable to afford them. If an individual has a need that a device doesn't meet, they can speak with IATP's Makers Program about custom fabrication.

"I am a person who was born with one hand, and now I am learning to play the guitar because of an IATP Makers creation – a prosthetic pick," says Schuyler-Weir.

In recent years, IATP has launched additional initiatives, including its Tech Kitchen, a program dedicated to equipping individuals with assistive technology tools and training needed to develop culinary skills and confidence in the kitchen.

"People were often asking us about training programs to learn independent living skills in cooking," says Schuyler-Weir. "We wanted to fill that void."

The IATP team welcomes individuals to their homestyle teaching kitchen in-person or virtually for demonstrations and to provide a tour of an accessible kitchen layout. The Tech Kitchen offers cooking classes to residents of Illinois aged 14 and up, with any disability, who currently receive services from one of the major bureaus of the Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services. They also coordinate home visits, sending a chef-instructor and occupational therapists to clients.

"Our team works with the individual to determine their specific needs, available resources and how they can benefit from assistive technology," says Schuyler-Weir. From there, the team employs a device loan system helping individuals acquire needed devices. Should that device no longer be needed, it can be recycled back to IATP's Reuse Program.

During visits, Tech Kitchen staff work with individuals to develop a variety of functions in the kitchen, including recipe literacy, meal planning, and knife and stove safety, using tools ranging from air fryers and induction burners to plastic cutlery and smart technology. It all begins, Schuyler-Weir notes, with time spent with the individual, learning their skillsets and enthusiasms.

"We never start with what it is that an individual can't do, but instead, with what they want to do – what they want to cook, and to eat – and what challenges are between them and these goals," she says. "We ask ourselves, 'How can we build up this individual and their experience in the kitchen?'"

Schuyler-Weir references one of their clients, whose mother was eager to see her son embrace his desire to cook, but who was concerned for his safety around stovetops.

"By the end of the day, he made quesadillas independently," says Schuyler-Weir. "People who never thought they or their loved ones could cook in the kitchen are seeing the benefits of these tools – who knew all that an air fryer could do, or that you could bake bread in a microwave? There are so many options."

While individuals can receive the fullest range of benefits of IATP's Tech Kitchen only as a client of Illinois' Division of Rehabilitation Services, Schuyler-Weir notes that the team works to find sustainable solutions for everyone, including resources on where to buy devices and how to access Tech Kitchen demonstration videos.

"We want to reach as many individuals as we can with this work because we know the impact it has on the lives of those who need it most."

In addition to working directly with individuals and their caregivers, IATP also responds to Tech Kitchen inquiries from community day programs and residential providers. Culinary education is a cornerstone of the curriculum at Gateway to Learning, a Lincoln Square program dedicated to providing lifelong learning opportunities to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To help inform their programming across four kitchen classrooms and onsite bakery Dorothy's Sweet Shoppe, Gateway contacted IATP for a virtual training.

"Many staff expressed interest in learning how to adapt culinary tasks to maximize participant independence, and IATP offers that expertise," says Amanda Bulgrin, director of community day services at Gateway to Learning. IATP's training covered topics such as mobility and low vision considerations, adaptive measuring tools, and knife safety. The insights served as refreshers and guidance for the Gateway to Learning team, which continues to champion the culinary arts as a means of creative expression and autonomy building for their community.

"When one cooks or bakes, the most noticeable result is the meal or the baked good. But the reality is that someone is gaining a lot of experience and skill development in the process," says John Ratzenberger, chief operating officer at Gateway to Learning.

Bulgrin agrees. "Life skills are key in a person achieving increased independence," she says. "In turn, these skills build self-esteem and confidence – it feels good."

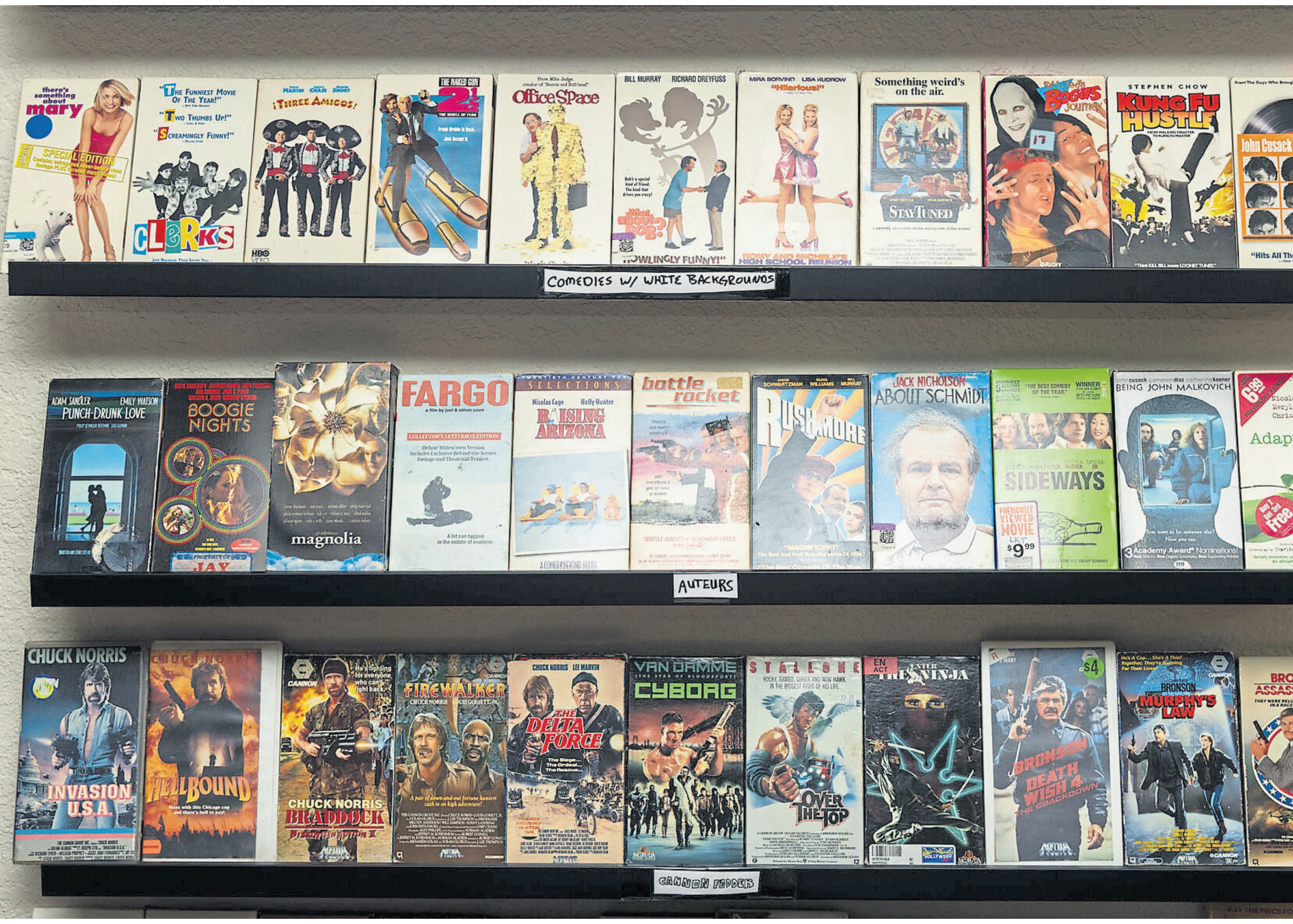
That Sunday at home, I came around the kitchen counter next to where Daniel stood and asked if he wanted my help. He looked at me, then back to his dish, now nearing completion in a steaming, perfectly fluffy scramble.

Daniel kept his gaze on the skillet, using the spatula along its edges, pausing his singing only momentarily to speak.

"I want to do it myself."

He returned to his song and to his spatula, smiling wider this time.

FOCUS



Juliana Yamada / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Chris Rose's thoughtfully curated film categories change from month to month, including his staff picks, seen here in the kitchen of his Silverlake apartment on Aug. 27 in Los Angeles, California.

He was nostalgic for retro video stores

So he built one in his kitchen

By LISA BOONE
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

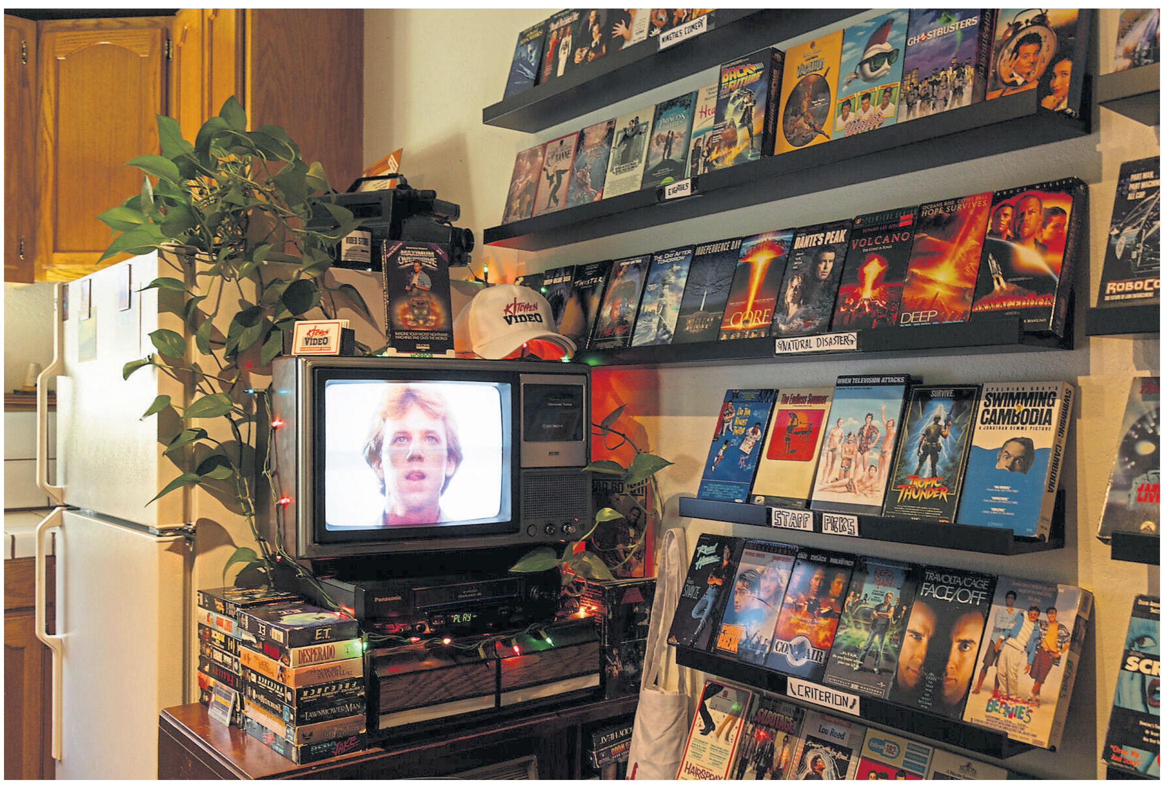
LOS ANGELES — Chris Rose fondly remembers the days when he worked at the independent video store We Luv Video in Austin, Texas.

He was in his early 20s and finishing film school at the University of Texas at Austin before heading to New York, where he eventually worked as a producer on "The Daily Show."

Now an L.A.-based writer, director and producer, Rose, 41, recalls the Austin store's eclectic assortment of cult oddities and world cinema.

"It was a spectacular kind of hip, indie video store that had just about any and every film you could ever want," he says. "They would have British or Japanese imports you couldn't get in the United States yet. It was a really, really special place."

Although he can no longer visit the video store, Rose doesn't have to go far to rent these days, as he has brought a similar yet distinctive collection to the kitchen of his one-bedroom bungalow in Silver Lake, which includes a small backyard.



Stephen King's 1986 horror film "Maximum Overdrive" plays on a 1970s-era Hitachi television Chris Rose found on Craigslist in his Silverlake apartment on Aug. 27 in Los Angeles, California.

The idea for his personal Kitchen Video, a micro version of an old-school video store, came to him one day as he was working on his laptop at his kitchen table.

"When I worked at the video store, we would put bad Stephen King movies on in the background and halfway pay attention to them," he says as "Maximum Overdrive" plays on a 1970s-era Hitachi television next to the refrigerator.

With that in mind, he thought it would be fun to play movies in the background while he worked from home. "It's such a weird dead zone," he says, gesturing to the space next to his kitchen. "It needed something as it's not big enough to be a dining room and not small enough to be part of a regular kitchen."

At the top of the more than 20 thoughtfully curated shelves filled with dozens of VHS tapes, Rose has placed a sign in bold red typeface that reads: "Kitchen Video." The sign serves as a playful nod to the space's dual function, reminding visitors that they are not just in a kitchen but also a video rental library.

Like We Luv Video and more traditional video rental stores like Blockbuster, Rose handpicks his staff favorites every month. This month's category is cyberpunk, or "the internet is scary," he says of the lineup, which includes "The Net," "Fear Dot Com" and "Johnny Mnemonic."

"The fact that someone titled a movie 'Fear Dot Com' is still, I think, one of the funniest things ever," he says.

Clearly, for Rose, discovering surprising and bizarre films is part of the fun of creating his own video library, and his personal taste and sense of humor in the selection process are evident.

His favorite category? "Comedies with White Backgrounds," a quirky selection of films including "There's Something About Mary," "The Three Amigos" and "Kung Fu Hustle."

"It's a trend," he says with a chuckle.

Other categories include Burning Hearts, a collection of what Rose describes as "messed-up romance movies" such as "Basic Instinct," "Moonstruck" and "Wild at Heart."

His personal Criterion Collection of poorly reviewed films that he, in fact, enjoys includes "Con Air," "Face/Off" and "Point Break." For his Film School category, Rose has chosen clichéd movies that students would watch in film school, like "Harold and Maude," "The Last Picture Show" and "Chinatown." And then there's From Ship to Shore, where Rose has attempted to transition from "Ghost Ship" to "Encino Man" with Pauly Shore.

"That's the most obtuse one," he says. "It took me three hours to figure it out. I wanted to make each film a logical jump – whether it was the director, actor or screenwriter – which was hard and ultimately not worth it."

And, of course, the Texas native couldn't resist devoting an entire shelf above the kitchen door to classics like "Friday Night Lights," "Clerks," "Dazed and Confused," "Paris, Texas" and "Tender Mercies."

Although his Kitchen Video is not open to the public, Rose invites his friends to come and "check out" videos, and he has even purchased old VCR players so they can watch his video library selections at home. In his enthusiasm, he admits he has gone "a little overboard" and created his own line of merchandise: Kitchen Video hats, aprons, tote bags and membership cards.

But that's not his only video-store membership card. He still has his Blockbuster rental card from childhood, where he says renting movies like "Rushmore," "Raising Arizona" and "The Graduate" opened up a whole new world to him.

"I lived in a small town in Texas, so movies were not a thing really beyond just what was playing at the theater that week," he says. "So going to a Blockbuster and digging to discover these hidden gems was really exciting."

His apartment has all the signatures of Rose's style, which he describes as "Southwest Marfa vibe meets eclectic thrift store discoveries."

In the bedroom, his vintage cowboy boots are neatly lined up against the wall below felt hats. In the living room, portraits of Willie Nelson and Hank Williams adorn the walls, alongside paint-by-numbers artworks, a cow skull and a Bennington flag he found in a Santa Fe, N.M., antique store.

When he moved from New York to L.A., he started over, but he did keep a coffee table made from the wreckage of Hurricane Sandy.

"One of my friends called it 'repressed cowboy,'" he says in describing his style as the Austin band Cactus Lee plays in the background. "I really try to make it feel put together, but always with a bit of irony or something tongue-in-cheek."

One thing he is serious about, however, is the illuminated globe that belonged to his grandfather. "That is what I would grab if my apartment were on fire," he says.

Despite the surplus of videos in his closet, Rose observes that he only invests in films that strike a chord with him, ones he plans to revisit. He scours the internet and local spots like Whammy in Echo Park for rare finds, but it's the ones he stumbles upon during his road trips between Texas and Los Angeles, in Goodwill and thrift stores, that hold a special place in his heart.

Like his Kitchen Video, film themes extend throughout the apartment, for which he pays $2,060 a month, including a Pop Art painting of David Byrne from "True Stories" and a print of Brandon Bird's oil painting "No One Wants to Play Sega With Harrison Ford" in the living room.

Recently, Rose started collecting audio cassettes, which he plays on an outdated boombox complete with an antenna.

"It's nostalgic," Rose says of analog technology. "It's the reason everyone collects vinyl. I have Netflix and Spotify, but there is real fulfillment in physically doing something."

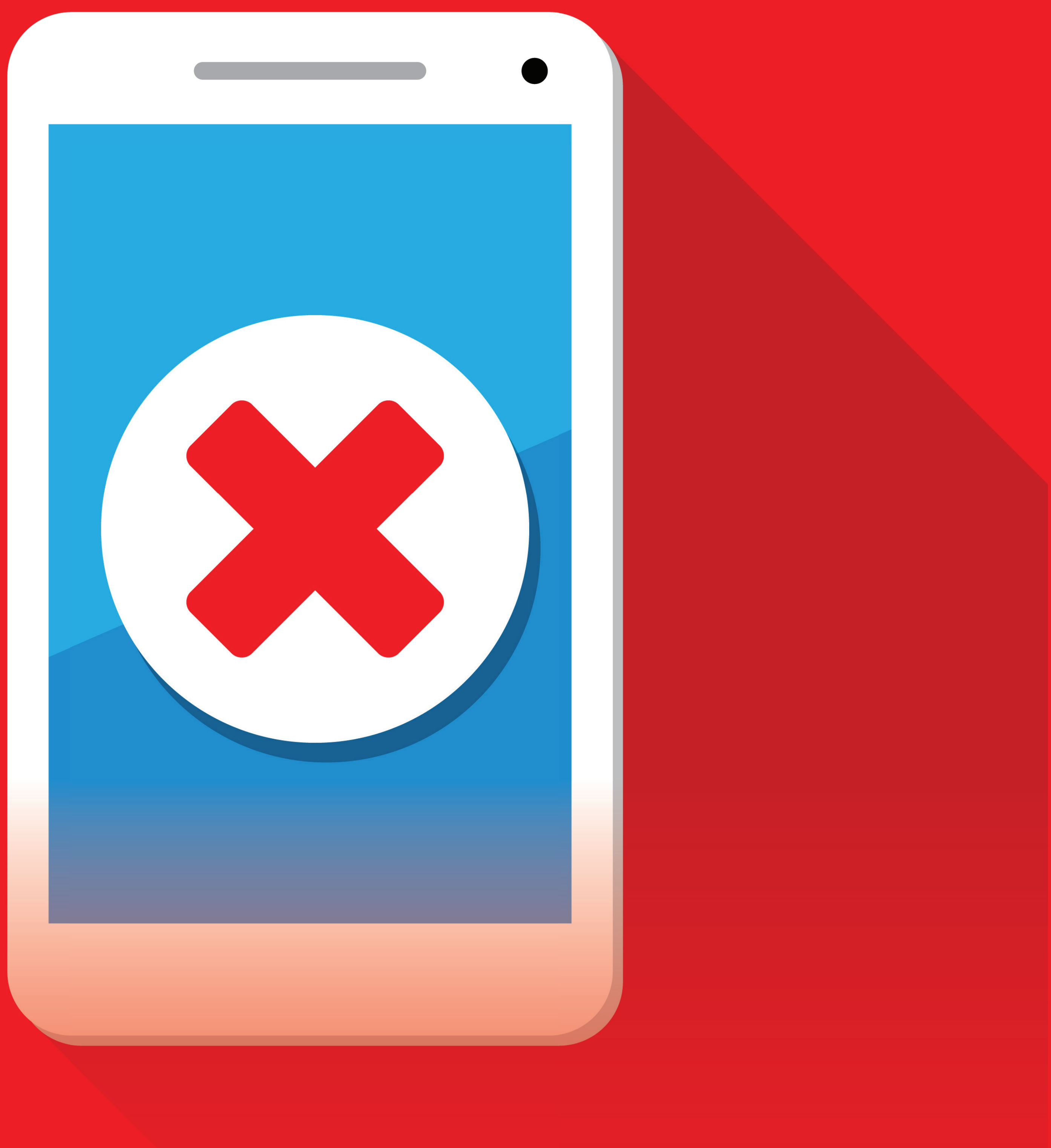
In the summer, Rose finds hosting movie nights for his friends in his backyard equally fulfilling. It's a luxury he has come to appreciate after living in a studio apartment in New York for a decade. "This is the nerdiest part: I've figured out a way to connect the VCR to a modern projector so I can screen movies from the VCR," he says, laughing at himself.

Most movie nights, he chooses popular films that are familiar but also unexpected. At his last screening, he showed Doug Liman's 1996 film "Swingers," which was filmed in Los Angeles, and for his upcoming gathering, he plans to screen Wes Anderson's first film, "Bottle Rocket."

That's not to say there isn't room for B movies that are "spectacularly wild and bad," he says.

"I just picked up this VHS called 'Repo Jake' that I'm really excited about watching," he says of the 1990 film starring Dan Haggerty of "Grizzly Adams" fame. "According to the box, our hero, Jake, is 'whipped into supersonic action involving a vicious crime lord, mob of angry car owners and a sadistic porno ring.'"

"That might be perfect for a screening," the cinephile says, underscoring the joy in discovering a movie that is so bad it's good.



Missouri school cellphone ban: Fewer fights, less anxiety, more ‘boredom’ for students

By MONICA OBRADOVIC
St. Louis Post-Dispatch (TNS)

ST. LOUIS — It’s lunch time at Kirkwood High School, and students are filtering out of the building.

Two boys make their way to a soccer field and toss a Frisbee. A small group of friends sit in the grass outside the auditorium. A picnic table near the school’s main entrance is full of students working on homework.

Something is noticeably absent from the scene: cellphones.

About a month into the school year, Missouri’s new statewide cellphone ban at public and charter schools largely is being hailed a success.

Educators are reporting more social interaction in classes and at lunch. Students are playing games or reading books instead of scrolling on Instagram or TikTok in their free time. The “lost art” of handwritten notes is back.

Many school districts already limited cellphone use, but the law has brought consistency, said Mark Penny, executive director of Missouri Association of School Administrators, and teachers are reporting stronger engagement.

“Overall, the direction is positive,” Penny said. “We expect the benefits to grow as procedures become routine.”

Student reviews of the policy are more mixed.

The Post-Dispatch spoke with 16 students from seven districts across the area about how the law has impacted them.

Responses ranged from criticism to acceptance – appreciation, even – of a cellphone-free reality that some have never experienced or are too young to remember at school.

Students said fights have declined. Some reported rising moods and declining anxiety. Others said classroom conversations have been more robust.

“I think my brain is more relaxed and refreshed,” Kirkwood High School senior Maggie Dunn said.

Heaven Smith, a sophomore at University City High, said the ban was needed.

“I feel like we’re attached to them,” she said at the end of a recent school day, after she put down her phone to talk to a reporter. “We need to learn how to interact more.”

Others were less positive.

For Angelo Ahuatzi, a Mehlville High School sophomore, school is “more boring.”

“I finish my work, and I can’t do nothing,” Ahuatzi said.

Jim Watson / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

Eighth-grader Ja’ Nae Dorsey, right, unlocks her cellphone pouch after school followed by her twin sister La’ Mae Dorsey, left, and 7th-grader Hayden Jones, center, at Mark Twain Middle School in Alexandria, Virginia, on March 6, 2025. The phone ban at the School is among a wave of measures implemented around the U.S., and is part of a global movement replicated in Brazil, France and beyond. Supporters believe restrictions will guard pupils from the apparent harms of smartphone use while at school, but opponents say the measures fail to prepare teenagers for the digital world they will inevitably enter.

Others said they have not observed much of a difference.

“It’s so much more productive,” Maplewood-Richmond Heights senior Minta Reeves said. “Other than that, you don’t really notice it.”

Eighteen states have banned phones from campuses throughout the school day, with most starting their mandates this school year.

While the benefits of restricting minors’ screen time are well documented, little research has been done on the effects of school phone bans.

Normandy Schools Collaborative in St. Louis County barred students from bringing any personal electronic devices on campus in January and told KMOV in March that out-of-school suspensions had dropped significantly.

Brigette Whaley, an associate professor at West Texas A&M University, studied a high school in Texas last year that required students to put their phones in locked bags.

The teachers she interviewed reported better behavior and student focus in class.

“The absence of having these cellphones or personal devices really helped shift the classroom culture toward a deep connection and more shared learning,” Whaley said.

More enforcement

Missouri’s new law, passed by the Legislature in May, requires public school districts to adopt policies that, at a minimum, prohibit students from displaying or using personal electronic devices from the beginning of the school day to the end.

Most schools already limited the use of cellphones, earbuds, tablets or other devices during the school day. Some had opted for expensive locked pouches to keep phones out of students’ hands, while others opted for classroom cubbies or left it up to students to keep them in their backpacks or lockers.

What has changed with the new law, students say, is enforcement.

Even in districts that previously barred phones during the day, students said school officials are taking phones away far more often and without warning.

Students at Hazelwood East High school said a school employee with a microphone walks around the cafeteria during lunch to call out people on their phones and confiscate the devices.

“There’s no second chance or nothing,” Hazelwood East Middle seventh grader Marli Mays said. “As soon as they see your phone, they just take it. You can’t even have it in your pocket.”

Students in some districts face possible expulsion or time in alternative school if they repeatedly fail to comply with the rule.

Hazelwood School District’s policy says phones will be confiscated on the first offense and returned only to parents at the end of the day.

That presented a problem to at least one parent.

Jessica Campbell said her daughter’s school, Hazelwood East High, closes before Campbell gets off work. Her daughter was walking home after her phone was confiscated one afternoon when a man pulled up next to her in a Chevy with no plates, telling her 10th grade daughter to “get in, they knew her mother,” according to Campbell.

“My child had no way to call me – or the police,” Campbell said.

Some students have found ways to get around the ban.

They hide their devices behind backpacks placed on their desks. Older students go out to their vehicles during lunchtime to check their phones.

Kitie Williams, a junior at Hazelwood East, said she is “very smart about it” and “never gets caught.”

She declined to share her technique but claimed she is not using her phone to text or check social media.

“It was never a distraction for me,” Williams said. “It was actually a help. The teachers don’t teach, or they don’t teach in a direct way.”

“Once my teacher don’t help me, I run straight to ChatGPT.”

Learning independence

Several students said they miss the practical uses of their phones.

Before the new law, some said they could sign up for clubs by using their phones to scan QR codes on flyers. Athletes said it has gotten more difficult to communicate with their coaches and parents about practices and game times.

Some students said the ban prevents them from taking pictures of notes and recording videos of science labs, which they used to reference later.

One of the most common complaints from students was that they no longer are able to access websites that school internet filters block on district devices.

“There’s a lot of research websites you can’t access on a Chromebook,” Maplewood-Richmond Heights senior Terence Askew said.

Jordyn Henderson, a senior at McKinley High in St. Louis Public Schools, said the public address system at her school did not work during the first week of school, which she argued was “an issue of safety.”

“If there was an intruder or anything like that, there was no way to get in contact with the whole building quickly,” Henderson said.

Henderson also said her school did not have access to “reliable” technology. The laptops at McKinley, she said, quickly lose their charge or frequently do not work.

“Last year, if the Wi-Fi wasn’t working or the computers weren’t charged, we could take our phone out,” Henderson said.

To Sophia Johnson, a sophomore at Francis Howell North High School, the ban is “overkill.”

Smartphones had become an essential part of education, she said. She also called it a misconception that teenagers want to stare at their phones all day.

“Students in our age group are trying to learn independence,” Johnson said. “I think part of being independent is being able to control yourself on your own cellular device.”

JakeOlimb / Getty Images

HEALTH

States target ultraprocessed foods

Snack food products manufactured by Mondelez are among those offered for sale at a grocery store on Dec. 11, 2024, in Chicago.

Scott Olson / Getty Images / TNS

By CLAUDIA BOYD-BARRETT
KFF Health News (TNS)

California Republican James Gallagher, the GOP's former Assembly leader, has often accused the state's progressive lawmakers of heavy-handed government intrusion, but this year he added his name to a legislative push for healthier school meals.

His party followed suit, with all but one Republican voting to send a bill to Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom that would put into law a first-in-the nation legal definition of ultraprocessed foods, followed by a public school ban on those deemed most concerning. And while it was California Democrats who led the passage of the nation's first state-level bans on certain artificial food dyes and additives, now conservative state lawmakers across the country have embraced new scrutiny of Americans' food as the Trump administration makes a push to "Make America Healthy Again."

"We see with our kids that they don't have access to necessarily the best food in their schools," said Gallagher, a father of five who as the GOP leader co-authored the recent bill with Democratic Assembly member Jesse Gabriel. "And we see it all around us, not just in California but throughout our country, that our kids are suffering from an epidemic of obesity."

The speed at which improving the healthfulness of America's food has become a bipartisan concern has come as a surprise to some health policy experts, given Republicans' ardent criticism of such efforts in the past.

"It boggles the mind," said Marion Nestle, a professor emerita at New York University who has studied food policy and nutrition for decades. "When Michelle Obama tried to make American kids healthy again, she was vilified by the right and accused of trying to exceed the government's role, creating a nanny state, and all kinds of other things. And now the Republicans are doing it."

While there is no standardized definition, ultraprocessed food generally refers to food that is industrially manufactured and contains ingredients not typically available in a home kitchen. These foods are often low in nutritional value and have high amounts of salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that more than half of Americans' calories come from ultraprocessed foods.

Scientific studies have tied ultraprocessed foods to poor health, including increased risk for heart attack, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and mental health problems. But some of the nation's most influential food industry groups warn that California's bill, if signed into law, could result in foods such as veggie burgers, canned tomatoes, and shredded cheese being labeled as ultraprocessed if they contain additives such as egg whites, citric acid, or corn starch.

"People view ultraprocessed foods as automatically bad," said Dennis Albiani, a lobbyist for several of the industry groups. "Healthy and natural foods could be categorized as ultraprocessed food, and just that categorization would send confusion to consumers that they should avoid these healthy foods."

At least 30 states – some of them deeply conservative – have passed or are considering restrictions on chemicals in food or food packaging, according to the Environmental Working Group, which co-sponsored the California bill. In March, Republican Gov. Patrick Morrisey of West Virginia thanked the Trump administration for "helping us launch this movement" when he signed legislation to outlaw several artificial dyes and additives from food sold in the state. And in August, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. joined Republican Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas when he signed legislation to require warning labels on foods containing certain additives or dyes.

Meanwhile, a dozen states, including Florida, Idaho, and Oklahoma, have applied for and received waivers from the U.S. Agriculture Department to prevent food stamp recipients from purchasing soda and, in some cases, candy.

Kennedy, who is leading the MAHA movement, has asked the industry to phase out petroleum-based synthetic food dyes, is exploring closing a regulatory loophole that allows chemicals to enter the food supply without Food and Drug Administration approval, and is seeking a federal definition for ultraprocessed food, which he says is to blame for an epidemic of chronic disease.

Department of Health and Human Services press secretary Emily Hilliard declined to comment on the California bill but said in an email that Kennedy "encourages state leaders to advance policies that prioritize children's health, support informed decision-making by families, and promote access to healthier choices." Some health experts have questioned whether the Trump administration is serious about cracking down on the food industry, especially after the latest MAHA report, released this month, appeared to back away from direct restrictions on pesticides and ultraprocessed foods.

California has a mixed record on attempts to limit what consumers eat and drink. The Democratic-controlled legislature has approved bans of additives and synthetic food dyes in recent years. But in the face of beverage industry opposition it has been unable to outlaw jumbo-size sugary drinks or tax sodas and other sugary beverages that health providers warn can increase the risk of weight gain, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cavities. At the time, Gallagher called the proposed soda ban "the kind of government intrusion that people can't stand," but he has since said that the evidence has convinced him that additives should be taken out of children's food.

Newsom had 30 days from Sept. 12 to sign or veto the ultraprocessed-food measure. Bill supporters hope the state regulations will have a ripple effect across the nation's food industry, prompting manufacturers to reformulate their products. California public schools serve almost a billion meals a year.

The California bill defines ultraprocessed foods as those high in saturated fat, salt, or added sugar (including non-sugar sweeteners), and containing at least one industrial ingredient from a list that includes thickeners, gases, emulsifiers, and artificial colors and flavors. Bill supporters say they have accounted for industry concerns, and the definition excludes "minimally processed" foods such as diced or canned vegetables, pasteurized milk, alcoholic beverages, infant formula, and medical food formulated to manage disease.

Not all ultraprocessed foods that meet the definition would be banned. Instead, the bill instructs the California Department of Public Health to identify a subsection of ultraprocessed foods "of concern" to be phased out. Factors for the department to consider include whether other states or countries have banned the food, and scientific evidence that the food causes harm or is engineered to be "hyperpalatable," which makes the food hard to resist.

The health department would have to adopt regulations defining those foods no later than June 1, 2028, and public K-12 schools would begin to phase out certain ultraprocessed foods by July 1, 2029. It is unclear how much the measure would cost schools, because it is not known what foods would be eliminated, according to an analysis of the bill.

For Jack Bobo, executive director of the UCLA Rothman Family Institute for Food Studies, the California bill's goal to make kids' meals healthier is a good one but creates unnecessary bureaucracy. Inevitably, the ultraprocessed foods that regulators decide are "particularly harmful" will be high in salt, sugar, and fat, which existing dietary guidelines have already established as unhealthy.

"People are worried about preservatives, they're worried about food additives, when they should just be focusing on fat, salt, and sugar first," Bobo said. "It distracts us from the core attributes that are actually causing the problem, or at least are causing most of the problem. We have too much fat and too much sugar in our kids' meals, just like we do in adult meals."

Bobby Mukkamala, president of the American Medical Association, declined to comment on the bill but said his organization supports more government regulation of ultraprocessed foods. But the first steps, he added, should be increasing public awareness about the dangers of these foods and educating people about healthier options.

Mukkamala criticized federal funding cuts to the National Institutes of Health that he said make it difficult for scientists to research which ultraprocessed foods pose the most risk. While much ultraprocessed food has little nutritional value, there are some processing methods – such as enriching cereal with folic acid – that could be considered beneficial, he said. And new products are emerging all the time.

"There's a lot of research that helps us figure out what's good and what's bad," he said. The federal government "is saying, 'Let's make us healthier by regulating this stuff, but let's not do enough research to tell us what to do.' It's like one step forward and one step backwards."

KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs of KFF – the independent source for health policy research, polling and journalism.

Scientists studied a 117-year-old for secret to long life – *here's what they found*

By JENNIFER RODRIGUEZ
Miami Herald (TNS)

A new study done on a woman who lived to be 117 points to possible factors that could've helped her live such a long life.

Maria Branyas Morera died at 117 years old in 2024, according to CBS News. She was the oldest known person alive at the time of her death, the outlet reported.

Before dying, she asked to be studied and was analyzed for three years, CBS News reported.

"During her lifetime, we extracted samples that would cause the least possible disturbance to her, including saliva, blood, urine, and feces. We didn't study anything that would cause excessive disturbance, because it's one thing for her to be generous and lend her samples for study, and another thing to take advantage," Eloy Santos, a researcher at the Josep Carreras Leukemia Research Institute and lead author of the study, told El Pais.

The results of the study were published Sept. 24 in the journal Cell Reports Medicine and detail key factors that may have influenced Morera's longevity.

Scientists studied her "genomic, transcriptomic, metabolomic, proteomic, microbiomic, and epigenomic landscapes in different tissues" and compared them with younger populations, according to the study.

Although Morera, who lived for 117 years and 168 days, had signs of aging, she did not develop major age-associated diseases, the study showed.

The study found that the key to longevity may be a "balance between nature and nurture."

"The conclusion is that the clues for extreme longevity are a mix between what we inherited from our parents and what we do in our lives," Dr. Manel Esteller, study author and chairman of genetics at the University of Barcelona's School of Medicine, told CBS News.

"The conclusion is that the clues for extreme longevity are a mix between what we inherited from our parents and what we do in our lives."

DR. MANEL ESTELLER
Study author and chairman of genetics at the University of Barcelona's School of Medicine

The study showed Morera had "genetic variants protective against common diseases (e.g., cardiovascular disorders, diabetes, and neurodegeneration), an efficient lipid metabolism, an anti-inflammatory gut microbiome, and an epigenome associated with chromosomal stability and decelerated epigenetic aging."

But she also lived a healthy lifestyle.

Morera was born in San Francisco to Spanish parents and moved to Spain at 8 years old, where she spent her life. She had "strong physical and mental health throughout life," had good sleep habits, ate a balanced Mediterranean diet and had an active social life.

"She largely enjoyed from quality time with family and friends, playing with dogs, reading books, growing a garden, walking, and playing the piano," the study said.

She had COVID-19 and "chronic age-related diseases like bronchiectasis, esophagus diverticulum, and osteoarthritis." But she was never diagnosed with other age-related diseases such as cancer or neurodegenerative diseases, while her siblings were, the study said.

Three times a day, Morera ate yogurt containing bacteria that are known to add to the growth of Bifidobacterium in the gut, the study said.

Bifidobacterium is believed to be a good bacterium that contributes to anti-inflammatory responses, the study said.

"Importantly, the use of Bifidobacterium as a probiotic that could slow down the progression of many aging-associated disorders is gaining momentum," the study said.

Researchers said that Morera's yogurt consumption could be a dietary habit that "is associated with healthy aging and long lifespan."

However, researchers noted that "whether the dominance of the Bifidobacterium related genus is fully attributable or not to the yogurt diet cannot be completely confirmed" without the collection of samples of a period of several years.

Researchers also noted that aging and longevity are "probably highly individualized processes" influenced by multiple factors and that "drawing broadly applicable conclusions from a single subject should be taken with caution."

Overall, the study shows how age and age-related disease can become decoupled.

"We have the concept that aging is equivalent to illness and that one thing necessarily goes hand in hand with the other. But this woman has shown us that, to a certain extent, this doesn't have to be the case," Santos told El Pais.

Off-label drug helps one boy with autism speak, parents say; experts want more data

By CÉLINE GOUNDER
KFF Health News (TNS)

Caroline Connor's concerns about her son's development began around his first birthday, when she noticed he wasn't talking or using any words. Their pediatrician didn't seem worried, but the speech delay persisted. At 2½, Mason was diagnosed with autism.

The Connors went on a mission, searching for anything that would help.

"We just started researching on our own. And that's when my husband Joe came across Dr. Frye in a research study he was doing," Caroline said.

Richard Frye, a pediatric neurologist, is one of many doctors searching for treatments that can help kids with autism. He's studying leucovorin, an inexpensive, generic drug derived from folic acid, also known as folate or vitamin B9. Leucovorin is currently prescribed to ease the side effects of cancer chemotherapy. Pregnant women are prescribed multivitamins with folic acid to prevent neural tube defects. The neural tube develops into the brain and spinal cord.

Leucovorin isn't a cure for autism, but "it could really have a substantial impact on a very good percentage of children with autism," Frye said.

This week, the FDA began the process of approving leucovorin as a treatment for autism, despite a lack of any large, phase 3 clinical trials.

"We do have some good preliminary evidence that leucovorin helps," Frye said. "But normally, the FDA would want to see at least a couple of large phase 3, placebo-controlled, randomized clinical trials. Right now, we only have phase 2B studies, and more research is needed to answer key questions, like how to dose it correctly, when to start, and which children will benefit most."

The theory behind the drug's use for autism postulates that some children have a blockage in the transport of folic acid into the brain that potentially contributes to some of the neurological problems associated with the disorder. Leucovorin bypasses that blockage and can help some autistic kids improve their ability to speak. Three randomized controlled trials of leucovorin to treat autism have shown positive effects on speech.

Frye cited five blinded controlled studies to date, all positive, although at different doses and in different populations. Still, he said, "the evidence isn't yet where it would normally be for a drug."

Frye said he was "disappointed" that his group had not received funding from the National Institutes of Health's new Autism Data Science Initiative and that he was not consulted on the design of upcoming leucovorin trials. "It's strange, because I've been leading this work for decades," he noted.

The science of cerebral folate deficiency

Cerebral folate deficiency, or a deficiency of folate in the brain, was first described by physician-researcher Vincent Ramaekers. Ramaekers found that some kids with neurodevelopmental disorders had normal levels of folic acid in the blood, but low levels in their spinal fluid. He then teamed up with researcher Edward Quadros, who had been studying how an autoimmune disorder might lead to a blockage of folic acid transport into the brain. Ramaekers and Quadros found that autoantibodies against the folate receptor alpha, which transports folic acid from the blood into the brain and the placenta, might cause abnormal fetal brain development and some autism spectrum disorders.

One study found that over 75 percent of children with autism spectrum disorder had FRa autoantibodies, compared with 10-15 percent of healthy kids. There is evidence of a familial or genetic predisposition for developing FRa autoantibodies. While environmental and immune system dysregulation may also play a role, there's no evidence to suggest that vaccines cause the development of FRaautoantibodies.

The brain has a backup system to the FRa known as the reduced folate carrier, or RFC. The RFC isn't as efficient a transporter as the FRa, but it can transport leucovorin, also known as folinic acid, into the brain. Enzymes in the brain convert leucovorin into the active form of folate.

Treatment with leucovorin increases brain levels of folate in kids with cerebral folate deficiency, or CFD. In one study led by Frye, one-third of such kids experienced improvement in their speech and other behavior when treated with leucovorin. Two randomized trials conducted in France and India showed similar results. A folate receptor autoantibody test (FRAT) is available to help identify which children may most likely respond to treatment.

Frye's team has also identified new potential biomarkers, such as the soluble folate receptor protein, that could predict which children require higher doses.

Frye noted that there are many nuances to treating CFD with leucovorin, including the addition of adjunctive treatments to optimize mitochondrial function.

The side effects associated with leucovorin are mild. Some children experience hyperactivity during the first few weeks of treatment, but that typically subsides within a month or two. A similar pattern is seen with other B vitamins.

Frye welcomed the FDA's recent interest but cautioned that it "may have been a little premature," given the gaps in knowledge and the need for education on how to prescribe leucovorin correctly in autism.

ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

There is no biological need for caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant that boosts alertness, energy and brain activity.
Tero Vesalainen / Dreamstime / TNS

The effects of caffeine on kids: *A guide for parents*

By MARK CORKINS, MD, FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

A cup of coffee or tea in the morning or an afternoon caffeine pick-me-up is usually fine for most adults. But parents might want to take a closer look at caffeine and other ingredients in the drinks their kids love.

Many popular beverages that kids go to for quick energy have a surprising amount of caffeine. Some drinks have other stimulants, too. These energy-boosting ingredients quickly add up in a smaller body.

Caffeine-related visits to U.S. emergency departments nearly doubled among middle and high school students between 2017 and 2023. In 2023, poison control centers recorded a 24 percent rise in calls about young people with reactions to energy drinks.

Here's what parents and caregivers need to know about caffeine – and how to guide children and teens toward healthy drinks.

■ There is no biological need for caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant that boosts alertness, energy and brain activity. Coffee and cacao beans, tea leaves, guarana berries and kola nuts are all natural sources of this drug, but it can also be made in the lab and added to foods, drinks and medicines.

■ A child's growing body and brain are more sensitive to their stimulation by caffeine.

■ Caffeine side effects can include fast or irregular heartbeat, elevated blood pressure, rapid breathing, anxiety, nausea, restlessness, diarrhea, and sleep loss

■ Caffeine can stay in the body for more than 8 hours, depending on a person's metabolism. When the caffeine wears off, children may have a headache and feel irritable or tired.

■ Caffeine can get in the way of other nutrients that help kids grow. They may eat less fruit, vegetables, lean protein and healthy grains after filling up on soda, energy drinks, protein bars and other ultra-processed foods with caffeine.

■ Caffeine affects kids' sleep. Not getting enough sleep or not sleeping well or long enough can affect thinking, mood, digestion and ability to avoid getting sick. Sleep loss leads to school struggles and robs kids of the energy they need for activities they enjoy.

Studies suggest that some kids are more sensitive to caffeine than others but we need more research to fully answer this question. Research has found that males were more likely to visit the emergency department for caffeine-related symptoms than females. Kids with heart or lung conditions may also be extra-sensitive to the stimulation of caffeine, since it speeds up breathing and heart rate. Kids who take stimulant medications for attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder or to treat other conditions may have sleep problems, irritability and mood shifts when they consume caffeine.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says avoiding caffeine is the best choice for all kids. Families should keep food, drinks and medicines with caffeine out of reach.

For most adults, having under 400 mg of caffeine per day is generally not associated with side effects. Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. People with some health conditions or who take certain medications may be more sensitive to caffeine.

Classic coffee mugs hold about 10 ounces. Super-sized coffee drinks are often 16 to 20 ounces and can have up to 490 mg of caffeine (already over the 400 mg level for adults).

Iced, chilled and frozen coffee drinks also contain caffeine. For example, a 13.7-ounce bottled Starbucks Frappuccino has 110 mg of caffeine and a Dunkin' Iced Coffee has 197 mg of caffeine.

Energy drinks can pack a dangerous punch in the caffeine department. This might be why so many labels carry warnings that the drink is meant for adults only. They come in fruity, candy-like flavors that appeal to kids. Some drinks are sugar-free, but others have a high amount of sugar that can amplify the effects of the drink. Energy drinks with caffeine may also have other ingredients like taurine, guarana, ginseng and L-carnitine.

Some sodas are a source of caffeine as well. For example (12-ounce serving): Pepsi Zero Sugar (38 mg), Diet Coke (46 mg), Mountain Dew (54 mg) and Mountain Zevia (55 mg).

Caffeine can hide out in foods, too. A 3.5-ounce dark chocolate bar might have anywhere from 50 to 150 mg of caffeine. Ice cream, protein bars, chocolate chips, energy bars and even chewing gum can have hidden caffeine. Nutrition labels do not have to list caffeine content.

Prescription and over-the-counter drugs such as medicines for migraine headaches, menstrual (period) discomfort, nasal congestion or muscle pain may have caffeine

Pouches are a newer method of ingesting caffeine. Caffeine pouches are small packets that are placed in the mouth between the gums and cheek or between the lips. They come in a variety of flavors that appeal to teens. The contents dissolve and the caffeine is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream. The effects are felt in minutes, making it easy to get a sudden, large and potentially dangerous dose of caffeine. Pouches may contain as much as 200 mg of caffeine. They look like nicotine pouches, which are restricted for sale to people age 21 years and older. However, there are no age restrictions on the sale of caffeine pouches.

The best way to steer kids away from caffeine is to talk with them about making healthy choices. You can encourage them to drink water instead and make sure they are getting enough sleep. The stimulation of caffeine is not a substitute for sleep. It is important to teach kids to trust the signals their bodies are sending them, especially when it comes to caffeine consumption.

A caffeine overdose can be dangerous. Get medical help right away if your child had a large amount of caffeine and symptoms such as racing or irregular heartbeat, fast breathing, body shakes that your child can't control (tremors), anxious feelings or the inability to sit still (hyperactivity).

Mark Corkins, MD, FAAP, serves as chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition.

Brian Cassella / Chicago Tribune / TNS

Ephrem Chen, 9, receives a COVID-19 booster shot and a flu vaccine from an IDPH nurse during a walk-in clinic on Dec. 3, 2023, at St. Procopius School in Chicago.

Study: Risk of long COVID in children doubles after second COVID-19 infection

By LISA SCHENCKER
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

CHICAGO — Children are twice as likely to develop long COVID after two COVID-19 infections, compared with children who've only had COVID-19 once, according to a new study co-authored by a doctor at Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.

The results of the study come amid controversy over COVID-19 vaccines, especially for children, with the state and federal governments issuing differing recommendations about who should get the shots.

The study offers one more reason why parents might want to get their kids vaccinated against COVID-19, said Dr. Ravi Jhaveri, head of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at Lurie Children's Hospital and a co-author of the study, which was published Tuesday in the peer-reviewed journal Lancet Infectious Diseases.

"There are a lot of children and families that suffer from the various conditions that comprise long COVID," Jhaveri said. "I think people tend to dismiss the omicron and beyond variants as not a big deal, not as bad as the original SARS-CoV-2 variants. While that's largely true in terms of the severity of the respiratory illness, I think we can appreciate that it can still drive whatever processes lead to long COVID symptoms."

A previous study from Jhaveri and others found that about 4 percent of kids who get COVID-19 develop long COVID, he said. Long COVID is a chronic condition that develops after a COVID-19 infection and lasts for at least three months, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Symptoms of long COVID in children can be similar to those experienced by adults, such as brain fog, difficulty concentrating, fatigue or a rapid heart rate. More common symptoms in young children may include behavioral issues, irritability and asthma, Jhaveri said.

Researchers behind the study published Tuesday analyzed the electronic health records of more than 465,000 children, looking at the prevalence of long COVID diagnoses and groups of symptoms common to long COVID, among kids who'd had one infection and kids who'd had two infections.

Researchers also found that the risk of certain long COVID symptoms in kids increased at different levels after a second infection. For example, the risk of myocarditis (swelling of the heart muscle) tripled with a second COVID-19 infection compared with just one infection. Blood clots were also more than twice as likely after a second infection versus a first.

It's long been known that adults who get multiple COVID-19 infections are at higher risk of developing long COVID and other problems, and it's useful to know that also applies to children, said Dr. Joe Bailey, a pulmonologist with the Northwestern Medicine Comprehensive COVID-19 Center, who was not involved with the study.

"That is valuable because people have been thinking about kids and adults really differently when it comes to COVID," Bailey said. "This is showing that there's still a medical consequence of getting COVID, even in children."

The study's publication comes on the heels of Illinois releasing its own recommendations on COVID-19 vaccines last week – guidance that broke with what the federal government has released.

A federal advisory panel recently decided not to recommend COVID-19 vaccines at all, instead leaving it up to individuals whether to get the shots.

That recommendation followed a May announcement by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., that COVID-19 vaccines would no longer be recommended for healthy children because of a "lack of any clinical data to support the repeat booster strategy in children."

Illinois, however, is recommending the COVID-19 vaccine this respiratory virus season for all children ages 6 to 23 months old and for children between the ages of 2 and 17 if they are in higher risk groups, or if their parents want them to have the shot – recommendations that are similar to those made by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Major health insurers have pledged to continue covering the vaccines this season.

The study published Tuesday is part of an initiative funded by the National Institutes of Health that includes 40 U.S. children's hospitals and health institutions and that aims to learn more about the long-term effects of COVID-19.

The initiative is still receiving funding at this point, Jhaveri said, despite other cuts made to COVID-19 research and programs by the administration of President Donald Trump.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is over, and HHS will no longer waste billions of taxpayer dollars responding to a non-existent pandemic that Americans moved on from years ago," the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said in a statement in March, as it announced cuts to state and local health department efforts related to COVID-19.

Illinois and other states sued over those cuts, and a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction temporarily blocking the cuts in the states that sued.

FINANCE

Dreamstime / TNS

The SECURE Act 2.0 became law in the last days of 2022, and its rules provide assistance for retirement savers, small businesses and many others.

10 of the biggest changes to retirement accounts due to new 401(k) and IRA rules

By JAMES ROYAL, PH.D.
Bankrate.com (TNS)

Congress has shaken up retirement plans once again, and the changes benefit a wide swath of Americans saving for their golden years through IRAs or employer plans such as 401(k)s.

The SECURE Act 2.0 became law in the last days of 2022, and the new rules provide assistance for retirement savers, small businesses and many others. In fact, the changes are so wide that many of them didn't officially begin until 2024 or later. The law is a sweeping follow-up to 2019's SECURE Act, which itself shook up retirement funding and planning.

It's worth noting that while the new law permits the following features, in many cases employers have to set up their retirement plans such as 401(k)s to actually enable those features. So you'll want to check with your employer to see if they offer the new features and when.

Here are ten of the most important changes in the SECURE Act 2.0 and what you need to know.

1. The age for required minimum distributions rises

The SECURE Act 2.0 changes the age for when savers must begin taking required minimum distributions (RMDs) from retirement plans, not once but twice. The age to start taking RMDs has now become 73, as of 2023, up from age 72. Then starting on Jan. 1, 2033, the age for beginning to take RMDs jumps to 75. The law applies to 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans and IRAs, among others.

"Probably the biggest change in the SECURE Act 2.0 is the change to RMDs," says Brian McGraw, CFP and senior wealth adviser with Hightower Wealth Advisors in St. Louis. "It's the one that retirees and soon-to-be retirees want to get right."

Due to the changes in the law, no one needed to start taking their RMDs in 2023. But if you had already started taking your RMD, you were not off the hook for taking it in 2023.

"People who are already taking RMDs still have to take them, but those who haven't started don't need to start for another year," says McGraw.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: The extra time could let you compound your money inside a tax-advantaged account for even longer, meaning you could have more money when it comes time to withdraw it.

2. No more RMDs on employer-sponsored Roth accounts

Starting in 2024, employer-sponsored Roth accounts such as the Roth 401(k), no longer have required minimum distributions. This change aligns the withdrawal rules for employer-sponsored plans with those for the Roth IRA, which has no RMD. Previously, many advisers suggested that clients roll over Roth 401(k) accounts to a Roth IRA to avoid RMDs.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: This change simplified the withdrawal rules for the Roth 401(k) and helpfully aligned them with those of the Roth IRA.

3. Lower penalties for missing RMDs

If you don't meet your RMD, you'll be hit with a penalty. Previously, that penalty was a whopping 50 percent of the amount that you didn't withdraw. The new law reduces that penalty to 25 percent. If you miss an RMD from an IRA, you may be able to reduce that penalty to 10 percent if you correct the deficiency in a timely manner and refile your taxes.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: The lower penalty means more money can stay in your pocket, though it's easy enough to avoid this penalty in the first place.

4. Automatic enrollment and escalation in retirement plans

Starting in 2025, newly created 401(k) and 403(b) plans will be required to automatically enroll eligible employees with a minimum contribution of at least 3 percent. Plans must include an auto-escalation feature that raises the savings rate by 1 percent annually, up to a maximum of 10 percent or 15 percent, depending on the plan. However, the employee may opt out of the plan.

"Perhaps the biggest hurdle employers face in helping their employees invest for retirement is simply getting people enrolled in retirement plans," says Edward Gottfried, Betterment at Work's director of product.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: "Auto-enrollment and auto-escalation don't just increase retirement savings but also contribute to better financial outcomes for employees: Employees who start out auto-enrolled more frequently contribute more than the amount they were auto-enrolled at then decrease that amount," says Gottfried.

5. Larger catch-up contributions

"One of the bigger things for savers is the larger catch-up contributions," says McGraw. "If you're between [age] 60 and 63, you'll be able to contribute up to $10,000 as a catch-up contribution."

Generally, the law allows workers aged 50 and over to make catch-up contributions of $7,500 each year to 401(k) plans, and that will continue. However, those in the special age group will be able to contribute up to the $11,250 level in 2025. The new provision began on Jan. 1, 2025.

In addition, the maximum catch-up contribution will be indexed to inflation, allowing workers to save more as inflation increases overall prices.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: Older workers will be able to save more in their employer-sponsored retirement plans.

6. Catch-up contributions for higher earners must go into a Roth

Starting in 2026, if you earned wages of $145,000 or more in the prior calendar year, any catch-up contributions at age 50 or older to an employer-sponsored plan must be made to a Roth account. If you earned less than this amount, you won't be forced to contribute to the Roth version but can decide to deposit it into the Roth version or a traditional (pre-tax) version of the account, for example, a traditional 401(k). That income threshold will be adjusted for inflation in the future.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: While it's useful to save a lot of money, the government wants to limit how much you can save in tax-deductible retirement accounts. The benefit is that more money will be stashed in an after-tax Roth account, meaning it's tax-free at retirement time.

7. Employer matching can be treated as a Roth contribution

Previously, any employer matching contributions had to be treated as a pre-tax contribution, meaning they went into a traditional 401(k) account or the equivalent. The new law changes that, allowing matching contributions also to go into a Roth version of the account, if desired. However, unlike the prior pre-tax matching funds, matching amounts that go into a Roth account are taxable.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: Workers have an even greater ability to sock away funds in Roth accounts, which lets you skip the taxes when it comes time to withdraw the funds at retirement.

8. Student loan payments qualify for matching contributions

The new law allows student loan payments to act like a salary deferral that can be matched by an employer's matching contributions. In effect, borrowers can pay off their student loans while still receiving the employer's matching contributions for retirement.

"In a recent survey of American employees, we found that 67 percent of savers said their student loan debt has impacted their ability to save for retirement," says Gottfried. "By allowing employers to offer a 401(k) match on dollars their employees use to repay their loans, we're going to see a massive increase in the number of savers and a fantastic step forward in those savers' preparations for retirement."

However, remember that employer-sponsored retirement plans such as 401(k)s have an annual employee contribution limit ($23,500 for 2025), capping the total potential benefit.

"This provision seems like a win-win," says McGraw.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: Those with student loans can still enjoy the "free" matching funds that are enjoyed by all those contributing to an employer's retirement plan.

9. 529 plans can be rolled over into Roth IRAs

One of the biggest downsides of saving in a 529 education savings plan has been what to do with the funds if they're unused. The SECURE Act 2.0 allows that money to be rolled over into a Roth IRA. But there's some fine print: The money can be rolled over into a Roth IRA for the beneficiary after the account has been open for at least 15 years, and is limited to the maximum annual Roth contribution. In addition, there's a $35,000 lifetime limit on the rollover amount.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: This change can provide a lot of benefit for those holding 529 plans with unused money.

10. SEP IRAs and SIMPLE IRAs now have Roth options

Small employers may use SEP IRAs or SIMPLE IRAs to help their employees fund retirement. Those plans got even better: The new law allows employers to offer Roth versions of those plans, giving employees the ability to grow and withdraw their wealth tax-free in a Roth account.

The new feature for SEP IRAs and SIMPLE IRAs were available starting in 2023, though plan providers will require some time to update their systems to allow for it.

HOW RETIREMENT SAVERS ARE IMPACTED: This is good news for the employees of small businesses who use these plans, allowing them the power of a Roth account.

Bottom line

This list of changes is just a starting point for what's contained in the law. Some features of the new law will not come into effect until next year or even later. But even without the fine print, retirement savers can still take advantage of the changes.

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FOOD

Emily Matthews / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette / TNS

Butternut squash in Sherrie Flick's garden as seen on Oct. 5, 2021, in the South Side.

GRETCHEN'S TABLE

Creamy butternut squash bisque

By GRETCHEN MCKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

It may not exactly be soup weather yet, but as we march into October, you know the brisk weather that mandates pulling on a sweatshirt will soon be upon us.

The enticing aroma of burgers sizzling on a grill is starting to be replaced by the smell of a backyard fire pit, and it's hard to walk two blocks without seeing Halloween decorations.

The scene is a little different at your local farmers market or grocery produce section, too. Bins that just a few weeks ago overflowed with sweet corn, peaches and local tomatoes now hold pumpkins, root vegetables like beets and rutabaga, kale and other hearty greens and a host of winter squash.

A perennial favorite is butternut squash, a peanut-shaped winter squash with yellow-tan skin and sweet, nutty orange flesh.

Often roasted as a side dish because it's so easy to peel, slice and cook – all you need to make it shine is a sprinkle of salt and drizzle of olive oil – butternut also makes the great base for a creamy and super-nutritious, seasonal soup.

This recipe from Tara Punone's upcoming cookbook, "Vegana Italiana" (Rodale Books, $32.50) is a great option for vegetarians, vegans and people who follow a dairy-free diet. Chock-full of veggies, it also is suitable for those trying to get more plant-based meals into their weekly rotation.

It starts with an aromatic, mirepoix-like mix of onion, carrots and celery sauteed in olive oil. The fragrant broth that cooks the veggies after chunks of squash are added also includes garlic, ginger and coconut milk, which adds a lovely creaminess and subtle coconut flavor.

The original recipe includes a teaspoon each of cinnamon and nutmeg, but I wasn't quite ready to commit to Thanksgiving flavors. So I flavored the soup instead with curry powder and a pinch of red pepper. I also decreased the amount of coconut milk from three cans to two to make it a little less fattening.

It's easy to puree the soup right in the pot using an immersion blender. If you choose to instead liquefy it in a blender, be sure to let the soup cool for a few minutes in the blender jar before hitting the on button, and work in small batches. Also, make sure to cover the top of the blender with a clean dish towel to prevent messy splatters.

Gretchen McKay / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette / TNS

Butternut squash is a favorite fall vegetable to turn into a warming soup.

When purchasing, choose a heavy butternut squash with smooth, unblemished skin and a dry, intact stem. Don't worry when it comes time to peel it – unlike other thick-skinned winter squashes like Blue Hubbard or kabocha, butternut squash is blessed with a thin and delicate skin that easily comes off with a good vegetable peeler.

With some thick pieces of buttered toast or a grilled cheese sandwich, this soup makes a filling mid-week meal. In small portions, it's also a lovely appetizer.

Butternut Squash Bisque

Serves 8

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
3 cups diced onion (about 1 large)
3 cups diced carrots (about 5 large)
3 cups diced celery (about 3 stalks)
1/4 cup peeled and diced fresh ginger
2 cloves garlic, finely minced
8 cups peeled and cubed butternut squash
2 15-ounce cans coconut milk
1 cup water
2 tablespoons maple syrup
Zest 1 orange (about 2 tablespoons)
1 teaspoon sea salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
Dash of cinnamon
Generous sprinkle of nutmeg
1 tablespoon curry powder, or to taste
Thinly sliced green onion, for garnish
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley, for garnish
2 tablespoons toasted pepitas, optional

In a large stockpot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion, carrots, celery, garlic and ginger, and saute for 10 minutes.

Add butternut squash and coconut milk to the pot and stir.

Cover the pot and bring soup to a boil over medium-high heat. Decrease heat to medium-low.

Keep the pot covered and simmer the soup, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes, or until squash is fork-tender.

Stir in water, maple syrup, orange zest, salt, pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg and curry powder.

Use an immersion blender to blend until the soup has a smooth, creamy consistency. It should not be porridge-like – add more water if it is too thick.

Garnish with green onions, parsley, pepitas and a drizzle of olive oil.

Adapted from "Vegana Italiana: Traditional Italian the Plant-Based Way" by Tara Punzone with Gene Stone

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Go ahead and heap spices on cauliflower. It can take it

By BETH DOOLEY
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Dinner is different with the arrival of autumn. Afternoon shadows lengthen, the air chills with scents of damp earth as leaves turn gold and red, and we turn away from the grill and toward the stove.

In a glorious farewell to summer, the harvest is at its peak. Stroll the farmers market aisles piled high with a collision of seasons – the brilliant tomatoes, glossy eggplant, deep green kale and early cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, beets and potatoes. Aren't we all hungry for more substantial comforting fare – the soups, stews, curries?

Celebrate the bounty with vegetable-forward dishes. Take cauliflower: Often underappreciated, it's extremely versatile and compliant. Blanched or steamed, cauliflower retains its mild cabbage-y, nutty flavors, ready to be boldly seasoned with hot chiles and warm Indian spices or swathed in a lush herb-scented cream.

Try roasting it on a sheet pan until deep brown with sweetly crisped edges, inviting a shower of shaved Parmesan and dash of lemon. Or combine these two techniques by pan-roasting cauliflower in butter and oil then cover and steam it until tender and creamy. Season generously for a hearty side dish, or when paired with beans and served on rice or tangled in pasta, it makes a simple, satisfying vegetarian dinner.

At the market, you'll find white, purple, green and golden cauliflower. All are equally delicious and can be used interchangeably in any dish. Just note that the purple cauliflower, when cooked, may turn a muddy, blueish to gray; the gold and green will retain their color. The colored varieties contain a few more nutrients and antioxidants than the white, and their flavors are a bit richer, sweeter and nuttier.

Nicoleta Raluca Tudor / Dreamstime / TNS

Take cauliflower: Often underappreciated, it's extremely versatile and compliant. Blanched or steamed, cauliflower retains its mild cabbage-y, nutty flavors, ready to be boldly seasoned with hot chiles and warm Indian spices or swathed in a lush herb-scented cream.

Cauliflower of all colors can stand up in vibrant curries of warm cumin and zingy ginger sparked with lemon, fresh cilantro and mint. No matter how you dress cauliflower, know it can take the pan's heat and bold flavors. Don't hold back.

Pan-Roasted Curried Cauliflower

Serves 4 to 6

Cauliflower screams for curry with plenty of cumin and ginger. This is the kind of one-pan dinner you can put together in 20 minutes. Serve with rice and a nice crisp salad on the side.

2 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 tbsp. unsalted butter
1 head cauliflower (about 1 1/2 lb.), cored and broken into florets
Coarse salt and black pepper
2 to 3 tbsp. curry spice blend, or more to taste
1 tsp. ground cumin
1 (1-in.) piece fresh ginger, finely grated
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
1 (15-oz.) can or 1 1/2 c. cooked garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice, to taste
Rice or pasta, for serving
Chopped cilantro and mint, for garnish
Lemon wedges, for garnish

Film a large sauté pan or cast-iron skillet with the oil and set over medium-high heat.

When the oil begins to ripple add the butter and melt, then add the cauliflower. Stir and cook until the cauliflower begins to color, about 3 to 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper lower the heat and add the curry, cumin, ginger, garlic and pepper. Stir well then add the beans. Cover to steam the cauliflower until tender, about 3 more minutes.

Serve with rice or pasta garnished with the chopped cilantro and mint, and lemon wedges.

If you like these tracks from *'The Life of a Showgirl,'* try these Taylor Swift songs next

By MALIA MENDEZ
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

For better or worse, "The Life of a Showgirl," Taylor Swift's 12th studio album, is unlike anything the megastar has done before.

On the 12-track album, which dropped last week to mixed critical reception, Swift is uncharacteristically risqué and, for possibly the first time, indulges her inner theater kid without reservation. In that sense, much of the pop record is daringly new.

Still, on each track are sonic echoes from the 14-time Grammy winner's decades-spanning discography – from the verve of "Reputation" to the romantic whimsy of "Lover."

Swifties are sure to be playing "The Life of a Showgirl" on repeat today. But if that gets a bit tiresome after the 13th time, here is a list of Swift sister songs to try instead, based on your favorite track from the new album.

(Some song pairings are based on sound, while others are based on shared themes.)

'The Fate of Ophelia'

"Showgirl's" opening track has a sultry groove and low pulse that could easily be the soundtrack to a flirty nightcap or the series finale of a dark comedy.

Find the same alluring melody with an extra dash of spice in "I Can See You," a vault track from 2023's "Speak Now (Taylor's Version)." And for bonus points, head to the music video for a dose of the Swift-signature theatricality dripping from "The Life of a Showgirl."

'Elizabeth Taylor'

This allusive track boasts the album's most sweeping chorus, anchored by Swift's mesmeric alto and a masterfully orchestrated rhythm that uses moments of quiet to its advantage.

"Reputation's" slow-burn hit "Don't Blame Me" follows a similar playbook, using a killer choral backing to achieve the same hymnal quality that complex vocal layering creates on "Elizabeth Taylor."

Plus, both songs share a secret weapon: Swift's irresistible enunciation of the word "baby."

'Opalite'

An immediate inductee into Swift's "Glitter Gel Pen" song Hall of Fame, "Opalite" is for dancing around your kitchen with a glass of orange wine in hand.

Fuel that infectious joy with the most twirl-worthy – and arguably most underrated – track of Swift's career, "Sweeter Than Fiction." Swift released this shimmering tune in 2013 for the "One Chance" film soundtrack, and true to its title, it is sweet as a peach.

Honorary mention: If you prefer a tambourine to a synth, try "Lover" B-side "Paper Rings," perhaps more suitable for kick-stepping than spinning but nonetheless another "Opalite" lookalike.

'Father Figure'

The natural choice here would be "The Man," another song wherein Swift adopts a masculine persona to prove just what a boss she is.

But I have no more sage advice than to head to George Michael's original "Father Figure" (1987), which recently got a streaming boost after being featured in the 2024 erotic thriller "Babygirl." Swift used an interpolation of Michael's song in her track of the same name – with a gleeful sign-off from the late singer's estate.

"When we heard the track we had no hesitation in agreeing to this association between two great artists and we know George would have felt the same," George Michael's estate wrote Thursday on his official Instagram.

'Eldest Daughter'

It doesn't feel entirely fair to compare these two – especially given one of them has Phoebe Bridgers and the other one has the line "I'm not a bad b—, and this isn't savage" – but "Eldest Daughter" and "Nothing New (Taylor's Version)" share the same grief for a younger self that a woman in her 20s knows best.

If you need a good cry, these two are here for you.

'Ruin the Friendship'

Speaking of debilitating nostalgia, this one might feel a bit out of place in this album's universe, but it's a heartrending gem nonetheless.

For a similar remorseful trip into the past, minus the boppy bass line, try "We Were Happy," a vault track from "Fearless (Taylor's Version)" about young love lost.

'Actually Romantic'

While this alleged Charli XCX diss track may be more scathing than usual for Swift, the singer is no stranger to shade, as evidenced in "Reputation" B-side "This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things" – a perfect pairing for "Actually Romantic."

In both songs, Swift is unapologetically petty, offering her foes a metaphorical bouquet of flowers thick with thorns.

These tracks aren't everyone's speed, but every misfit has its fans. And in the case of "Actually Romantic," Nicki Minaj seems to be one of them.

'Wi$h Li$t'

Showcasing this album's gentler side, "Wi$h Li$t," which Swift said may be her personal favorite, is a tender tribute to her fiancé Travis Kelce, backed with ethereal synth sounds and soft vocalization from a clearly smitten showgirl.

"I just want you" is also the mission statement of "Glitch," a short and sweet pop number from 2022's "Midnights." Turn this one on, and in no time you'll find yourself swaying side to side, daydreaming about the love you never expected but can't imagine letting go.

Honorary mention: For a more upbeat option, go for "Gorgeous," a bubblegum-pop anthem just as swoonworthy as the aforementioned tracks.

'Wood'

This raunchy disco track had jaws dropping across the globe upon its release, and for good reason.

While not as high on shock factor, Swift's "I Think He Knows," a lesser-known track from "Lover," is equally dancy and down bad. On top of that, it's famously set at a perfect strutting pace. What more could you ask for?

'CANCELLED!'

This is the second song in Swift's oeuvre featuring a title with an exclamation point (we'll get to that later), and it's not the best one.

But if you like the dark energy Swift has going on here, you can get plenty more of it in her live rock 'n' roll version of "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together," which she pulled out for the 1989 World Tour and hasn't played since.

Here's hoping the country crossover artist has another genre hop in her.

'Honey'

True to its title, "Honey" is a welcome salve for some of this album's more sour numbers and shares striking sonic similarities with Swift's best song adorned with an exclamation point, "'Slut!'"

The "1989 (Taylor's Version)" vault track, like "Honey," uses a name-calling motif to paint a rosy portrait of her romantic partner. Neither is lyrically complex, but if "'Slut!'" is any indication, "Honey" is sure to wind up a true fan favorite.

'The Life of a Showgirl (feat. Sabrina Carpenter)'

Finding a song that sounds like "The Life of a Showgirl" is a tall order, if not an impossible one.

So for a theme-based pairing, try fellow album closer "Clara Bow," which caps off the original edition of "The Tortured Poets Department" (2024) with a mournful commentary on the constant churn of young female stars.

As Swift and Carpenter say, "You don't know the life of a showgirl, babe, and you're never gonna wanna."

Honorary mention: For another Swift track about the pitfalls of fame, try "The Lucky One," off 2012's "Red."

Taylor Swift performs on stage at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida, on Oct. 18, 2024.
Chandan Khanna / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

MOVIE REVIEW

Disney Enterprises, Inc. / TNS

A scene from Disney's "Tron: Ares."

'Tron: Ares' review: Jared Leto, Greta Lee lead stylish, lackluster sequel

By DOMINIC BAEZ
The Seattle Times (TNS)

To its credit, "Tron: Ares," the third entry in the Disney film franchise dating back to 1982, is everything you expect it to be. It's pure nostalgia bait (Jeff Bridges! Space Paranoids! Floppy disks!), stuffed with callbacks and references to both the original "Tron" film and the 1980s themselves. It's a visual showstopper, a dazzling display of stunning special effects all bathed in neon reds and blues. Its intentionally harsh and techno-infused score, crafted by Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross' Nine Inch Nails, is pulse-pounding, a perfect companion to the futuristic chaos unfolding on-screen.

But to its detriment, "Tron: Ares," a sequel to 2010's "Tron: Legacy," offers nothing more than that. Bogged down by a simplistic binary plot that pits the evil red team against the good blue team and that only skims the surface of its meatier themes, "Ares" is the textbook definition of style over substance.

Directed by Joachim Rønning, who's helmed other Disney sequels including "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales" and Maleficent: Mistress of Evil," from a screenplay by Jesse Wigutow, "Tron: Ares" flips the premise of the original movie. Instead of humans being transported to the digital world of the Grid, the artificial beings (known as Programs) and technology from the Grid come to our world through the most impressive 3D printing setup you've ever seen.

The crux of the story revolves around two companies, ENCOM and Dillinger (both of which will sound familiar if you've seen the first movie), as they race to discover what's called the Permanence Code, a phrase you'll hear about 100 times too many. It turns out that while both companies can bring the digital to the real world, those creations have a strict 29-minute life span before they painfully dematerialize in a shower of dust.

In this technological arms race that quickly turns into an actual arms race, ENCOM, led by Eve Kim (standout Greta Lee), wants the code so it can help the world: feeding the hungry, housing everyone, creating medical breakthroughs (a personal goal for Eve). Eve views artificial intelligence as benevolent, something that can aid humankind in solving its most intractable problems. Dillinger, on the other hand, has profits and warmongering in its sights; orange trees and Quonset huts are out, hyperstylized weapons are in – which leads to the creation of the digital security program known as Ares (a mostly forgettable Jared Leto).

Ares is the ultimate soldier: sturdy, strong and utterly expendable, according to the cartoonishly amoral company CEO Jullian Dillinger (a manic Evan Peters). If one version goes down, Dillinger will just print another. (Jodie Turner-Smith delivers a coolly sleek performance as Ares' second-in-command, Athena.)

But in a twist everyone will see coming, Ares begins to question his creator, particularly after a fellow program is destroyed during a creatively stylized digital break-in into ENCOM's Grid. Pair that with Ares experiencing new "feelings," like the sensation of rain on his body in the real world, and it's no wonder why he doesn't want to be expendable anymore.

But that's the thing with "Tron: Ares": There's almost no surprise, no nuance, at all. It's hard not to roll your eyes when Ares starts quoting "Frankenstein," as if the parallels to Mary Shelley's classic weren't obvious enough. For a franchise about the boons and perils of AI, it's a shame "Ares" boils the conversation down to "good guy uses AI for good, bad guy uses AI for bad." And Ares' evolution from program to rebel prompts questions about the human condition, but that conversation stays surface-level.

If all you want out of your "Tron" movie is amazing visuals, a great score and some fun action sequences with light cycles, cool weapons and even a Recognizer, "Ares" will execute that command. Anything more, though, and it all starts to get a little glitchy.

SERIES REVIEW

'The Gold' spins the tale of a 1983 British heist into a patient portrait of cops, robbers, class and greed

By ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Sally Mais / All3Media and Masterpiece / TNS

"The Gold" on PBS Masterpiece stars Charlotte Spencer, from left, Emun Elliott and Hugh Bonneville.

On Nov. 26, 1983, six men robbed a warehouse serving London's Heathrow Airport. Hoping to find £1 million worth of foreign currency, they found instead 6,800 gold bars, worth £26 million in 1983 money – a record-setting robbery at the time – under the temporary supervision of Brink's-Mat. (A union of the American security firm and a British transport outfit.) This event has been transmuted into "The Gold," an involving British drama premiering here Sunday on PBS.

The robbery itself takes up little screen time; the question on the criminal side becomes how to turn three tons of gold into cash, and for the police, one of recovering the loot and bringing the villains to justice. The cops and the criminals overlap here and there, a point screenwriter Neil Forsyth does not want you to miss, and is a particular bee in the bonnet of upright Detective Chief Superintendent Brian Boyce (Hugh Bonneville), self-contained but always ready to speak his mind. (He is also "infuriated" by what people get wrong about jazz, which he likens to police work.)

Recruited by Boyce to a special task force are detectives Tony Brightwell (Emun Elliott), historical, and Nicki Jennings (a charismatic Charlotte Spencer), invented, who are good company for the viewer and generally for each other, though as people who spend long hours sitting together in cars waiting for something to happen, they have their moments of friction, played for humor. As a created character, Jennings – who, as a woman, has to outline the many steps and hard work it took to achieve her position – offers an opportunity for emotional elaboration, notably in scenes (affectionate, prickly) with her father, Billy (Danny Webb), "by a country mile the worst villain in England," his criminal career sidelined by ill health.

Though one of the actual robbers, Micky McAvoy (Adam Nagaitis), gets a good deal of attention, the bulk of the series involves three criminals subsequently processing the gold and laundering the money. Kenneth Noye (Jack Lowden) is "a fence with protection," owing to his friendship with police officers through membership in the Masons. (When Boyce brings Jennings and Brightwell onto his team, he sets the rules as "no overtime, no drinking at lunchtime, no freemasonry.") John Palmer (Tom Cullen), a dyslexic dealer in gold and jewelry, has a handy portable smelter in his yard. And the invented Edwyn Cooper (Dominic Cooper), an up-from-the-streets solicitor with posh airs and a rich wife whose snooty parents treat him with barely disguised disdain, finds himself working for "a group of businessmen who have a lot of money that needs to be made respectable," in the words of liaison Gordon Parry (Sean Harris, sinister).

Stretched over six episodes, it's not a speedy telling, and, in fact, a second series covering a long tail of aftermath has already aired in the U.K. Apart from some surveillance, tailing suspects, one fatal encounter and an occasional chase, there's little in the way of capital-A Action, mostly just a lot of talk – inquisitive, instructive, threatening, discursive, domestic or speechifying. Though the production is naturalistic – in a way that ties it to an earlier, golden era of British productions – the dialogue can sound highly composed. Characters are given little monologues, often to explain how they became the person they are, that play as the sort of thing that might occur late in the last act of a stage drama: Jennings found the sirens outside her window comforting, which led her to police work, "so that kids like me will be safe"; Boyce had a life-changing moment involving a pair of red leather shoes while fighting in the so-called Cypriot Emergency. Some dialogue might have been lifted whole from a 1930s gangster film. Critiques of British class structure and bad actors within the police department are raised high enough to be impossible to miss.

There are a lot of moving parts in "The Gold," represented in sometimes brief alternating scenes, and it may take a while, among the crooks, at least, to get a handle on things, to sort out where you are, who's who, who's married to whom, and what part each plays in the caper. Though Noye is arrogant enough to root against, Forsyth wants to show, as much as each character allows, the just-folks elements of his bad guys, psychologically relatable sorts who have, from early experience, a lack of opportunity, or a certain kind of genius, decided that the path to freedom is best paved with other people's money. ("If it wasn't for people trying trying to break out of the lives they've been given," observes Boyce of his country's social stratification, the police would be out of a job.) This may be soft-pedaling matters somewhat – to read the historical accounts might give you a different picture – but as drama it pays dividends.

As a period piece, it doesn't oversell the era. There are old cars, of course, and more mustaches than we are currently accustomed to. But apart from the pop songs that run over the end credits, nothing screams These Are the '80s. (Compare, for example, the "Life on Mars" sequel, "Ashes to Ashes.") It's more a question of what isn't there. The detectives have a computer, but only Brightwell has an idea of what it's for or how to use it. No cellphones, but there are walkie-talkies. A tracking device, apparently the only one in all of British law enforcement, has to be imported from Belfast (and sneakily at that). There is a refreshing absence of guns – none of those Kevlar-clad teams going in with pistols raised. (Just truncheons.) And the remodeling of East London into a gentrified glass forest, a minor plot point, has only just begun.

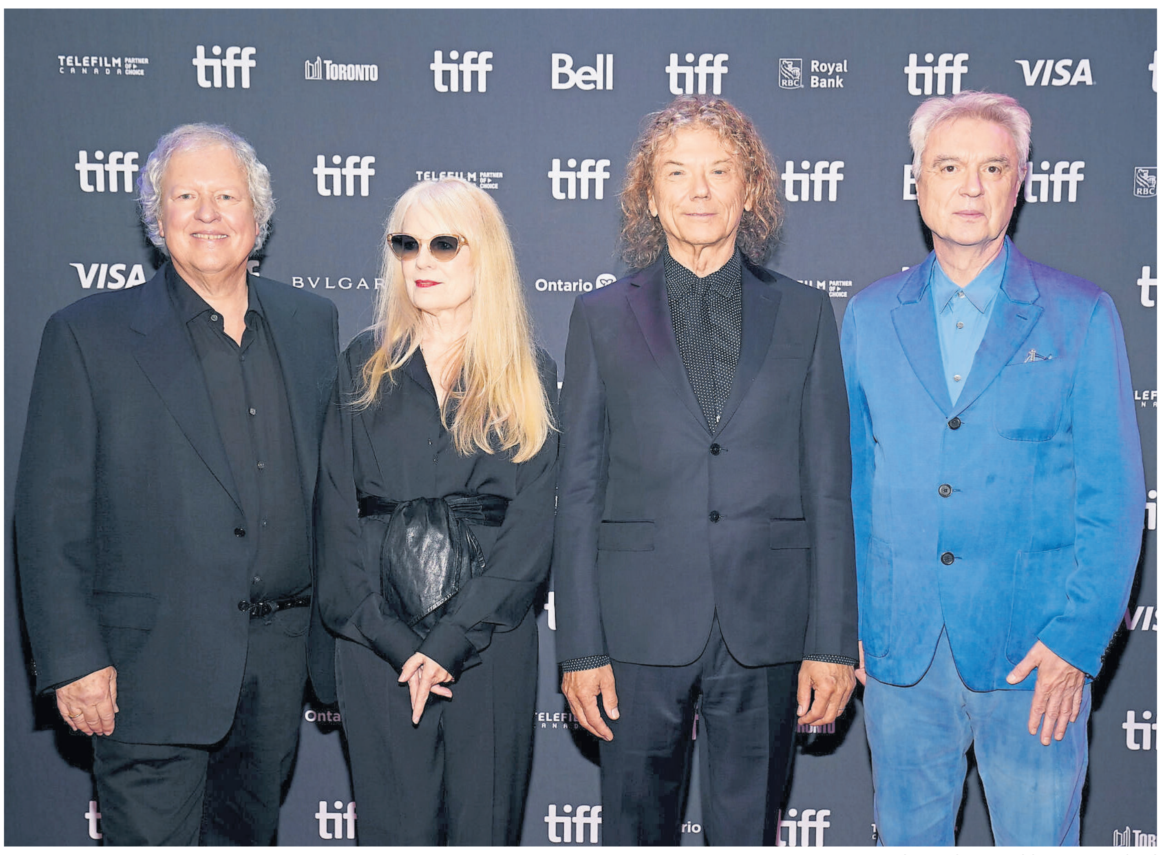
It's like a vacation from now, and who can't use one of those?

Why Jerry Harrison says Talking Heads are more popular now than 15 years ago

By PETER LARSEN
The Orange County Register (TNS)

Courtesy A24 / TNS

David Byrne of the Talking Heads in the 1984 concert film “Stop Making Sense.”



Shawn Goldberg / Getty Images / TNS

From left, Chris Frantz, Tina Weymouth, Jerry Harrison and David Byrne attend the “Stop Making Sense” premiere during the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival at Scotiabank Theatre on Sept. 11, 2023, in Toronto.

Vittorio Zunino Celotto / Getty Images / TNS

Jerry Harrison attends the “Stop Making Sense” 40th Anniversary” red carpet during the 19th Rome Film Festival at Auditorium Parco Della Musica on Oct. 19, 2024, in Rome.

ANAHEIM, Calif. — When Talking Heads released a restored and remixed version of their classic 1984 concert film “Stop Making Sense” for its 40th anniversary, guitarist-keyboardist Jerry Harrison says it confirmed something that the influential art rock band had been sensing for a while.

“We have a sort of resurgent younger audience right now,” says Harrison, who is on the road presenting the film at special screenings. “I actually think it’s larger than it was 10 years ago, interestingly, or 15 years ago.”

Singer David Byrne saw the likely reason, says Harrison, who with Talking Heads ‘ Byrne, drummer Chris Frantz and bassist Tina Weymouth, premiered the film at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2023.

“David pointed this out, but I think it’s really salient,” he says. “With streaming, people are often introduced to music because they decide to get a stream that is curated, sometimes by a computer, but sometimes by a person. And Talking Heads have found themselves in contemporary streams, but we’re not date-stamped.

“It’s just a song by us,” Harrison continues. “People who know who we are will then go like, ‘Oh, that’s Talking Heads. That was a long time ago.’ But if you’re a younger person, it’s just like in a stream with LCD Soundsystem and Arcade Fire and even far more younger acts, and they just go, ‘That’s cool. I want to learn more about that,’ or something like that. So after being prompted a few times, then people start to explore that.”

Prior to streaming, Talking Heads’ music was was linked in some people’s minds to the years between 1975, when the band formed, to 1991, when it ended.

“If you go back from 15 years ago to 30 and 40 years ago, it was more likely a radio station or a Sirius channel,” Harrison says. “And it would be ‘Music from the ’90s,’ ‘Music from the ’80s.’

Then streaming music changed all that.

“What happens now, it’s just like a DJ in a club, like, what is a cool transition between this song and this song? And our songs seem to fit that.”

In an interview edited for length and clarity, Harrison talked about finding a lost negative in a film in a Kansas vault, the common questions he gets on the tour, his memories of director Jonathan Demme shooting four nights of Talking Heads at the Pantages Theatre in Hollywood in December 1983, and more.

Q: How did you end up taking the film on the road this fall?

A: It basically stemmed from realizing, when the four of us were talking about it, that because I was the person who put together the team that remixed it and spent most a good part of the year on that, and then I was the one who coordinated with James Makowski, who was in charge of the visuals, a good half of the questions were ones that only I could answer.

And I thought, well, you know, I could do this on my own and provide, I think, an interesting evening for someone who wants to come and see the film, and learn a little bit more about the process of the restoration, as well as have the opportunity to ask questions about Jonathan Demme. And, of course, the band itself.

Q: Are there certain things people tend to ask you at most screenings?

A: Well, there’s sometimes confusion. They’ll ask a question, like, “Did you rehearse a lot for the film?” And it’s like, “No, we didn’t rehearse a lot at all, because this was the show we did every night.” Some people think that somehow the staging was created for the film, and not that the film was just capturing a live performance that we had designed and then carried out all over the world.

Then there are people talking about, “Well, how did that come about? How did this sort of narrative, or storyline, of starting as bare and as small as possible, and going to, I think, it’s nine people on stage?

So I tell the story of how the different tours with the big band were a little bit different, but they’d always started with the four of us. And I think that David just decided, well, we could do this a little bit more extremely. And there’s a transition from the band that had Adrian Belew in it, the first iteration for the Remain in Light tour.

Then there was another tour for “Speaking in Tongues,” where the Tom Tom Club [Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz’ side project] opened for us, and then the Stop Making Sense tour. And each one of them, certain things were being refined. They were becoming far more visually oriented. You know, Talking Heads was kind of well known for just coming on and turning the white lights on and just leaving sort of a very stark and bare-bones presentation.

Q: Tell me more about all the time you spent remastering the film this time.

A: Remastering does not really do it credit. We went back to the very beginning and remixed the whole thing. Remastering is when you put some EQ and compression on something.

Q: OK, so tell me about remixing it, but also spending that much time with a film from 40 years ago.

A: I was working with Eric Thorngren, and E.T. and I did the mix for the [first soundtrack] album for “Stop Making Sense.” That was the first time we worked with E.T. He went on to do “Little Creatures” and “True Stories” as well with us, and he’s worked on a lot of my production work.

Then, in 1999, when we did the first DVD release of the film, he was the one who was involved in that mix. And then we remixed all of the Talking Heads albums for Dolby Atmos. So the idea of going back and looking at Talking Heads material was kind of familiar to both of us, because we had spent some time in the last decade doing stuff like that.

But this is the one where we had the time to spend a lot of time on it. We got going the minute we decided that we were signing with A24, and there was sort of a “This is going to go to the Toronto Film Festival in eight months or six months.” It’s like, “Well, OK, we want to make this look and sound as good as possible.” So we realized that we had to go back to square one, get the original multitracks and start.

Interestingly, there were sync issues until we finally found a tape that was hidden in an MGM vault in Kansas. MGM had nothing to do with this film, and it was kind of found in the last month of working on this. So we scrambled and we eventually went back to really the same film mix facility where we mixed it in ’84.

We were not in the exact same room, but it was interesting to be all the way back to the same facility. It was important for us to hear it in a theater of a certain size, rather than in a room that was, you know, 15 by 15 or something like that.

Q: What was it like with Jonathan Demme and his crew filming the shows at the Pantages? Did much change for the filming?

A: I would say that the show was largely the same. We made some adjustments for [cinematographer] Jordan Cronenweth, who said that certain lighting was too bright and was overly saturating the film. So we tailored the lighting so that it would read the best on film.

And then Jonathan [Demme] noticed that in the way that there’s like an ensemble group acting, that there were moments of, you might say, conversation between different band members, either dancing or talking or something.

So Sandy McLeod, who was sort of an assistant director, went around and made notes for Jonathan, like, you know, “Something great happens on stage right in the middle of ‘Girlfriend is Better.’ Or, you know, “Make sure that you get the way Lynn [Mabry] and Ednah Holt] are interacting with David in this song.

“One of the reasons we shot it over multiple days is that we put sort of railroad tracks in the theater for a dolly, to hold these very large Panavision 35 millimeter cameras. We then had one come down the middle, one come down the left, one come down the right on the three successive days. And this had to do with making sure that we had enough people in the audience that it felt live, that it didn’t just feel like a film shoot.

Had we had three sets of railroad tracks, that it would have been a very sparse audience, and there wouldn’t have been the sort of back and forth that a band feels with the audience. So we felt that was essential to getting the right performance.

Q: What do you remember about the first time you saw the finished film with an audience?

A: The first time I saw it in front of people was at the Florence Film Festival, which was kind of cool. Bernardo Bertolucci and Susan Sarandon were there, various other notables of the film world, and, of course, a foreign audience. It was, it was really quite great.

Then we went around the film festivals. I would have to go up and, like, adjust the Dolby. At the time, it had this primitive matrix system so that you could get some sound coming out of the rear of the theater, but when it was adjusted wrong, it would do things like take the snare drum and throw it in the rear. And that was disconcerting. So I would go and adjust each theater for the sound while we were doing the film festivals.

Q: I assume the sound is much easier to manage with the new version?

A: Yeah, but it’s been interesting on this run. I would say the majority of the theaters that have taken it also have performing acts, and they usually do the stereo mix with a kind of beefier sound system. More make it a live concert than dwell on the sort of surround sound nature that the film has the possibility to have.

There’s sort of two ways to watch this film. I guess the ultimate is an IMAX where everything is really hyperreal. It’s very big. And you’re like, just sort of looking at it and going, like, “God, I never saw that because I never had that detail.” And then the other one is, you know, these kind of more classic theaters where very often people want to get up and dance in the aisles.

Q: What was it like when you saw people dancing in the aisles with this release?

A: We had a couple of screenings in places where everybody had to stand, so of course, they dance. Then recently, my wife and I went over to the Rome Film Festival a year ago or so. And they had another screening up in Milan, and they actually had – this was hysterical – they had a whole rack of big suits [like David Byrne wears in the film] for people to try on to have their picture taken.

They had these two professional dancers get on the stage before the show and try to teach David’s bizarre dance moves to the people in the audience. It was so cute.

Q: This year is also the 50th anniversary of Talking Heads, though you didn’t join until ’76, I think. What do you remember about them reaching out to ask you?

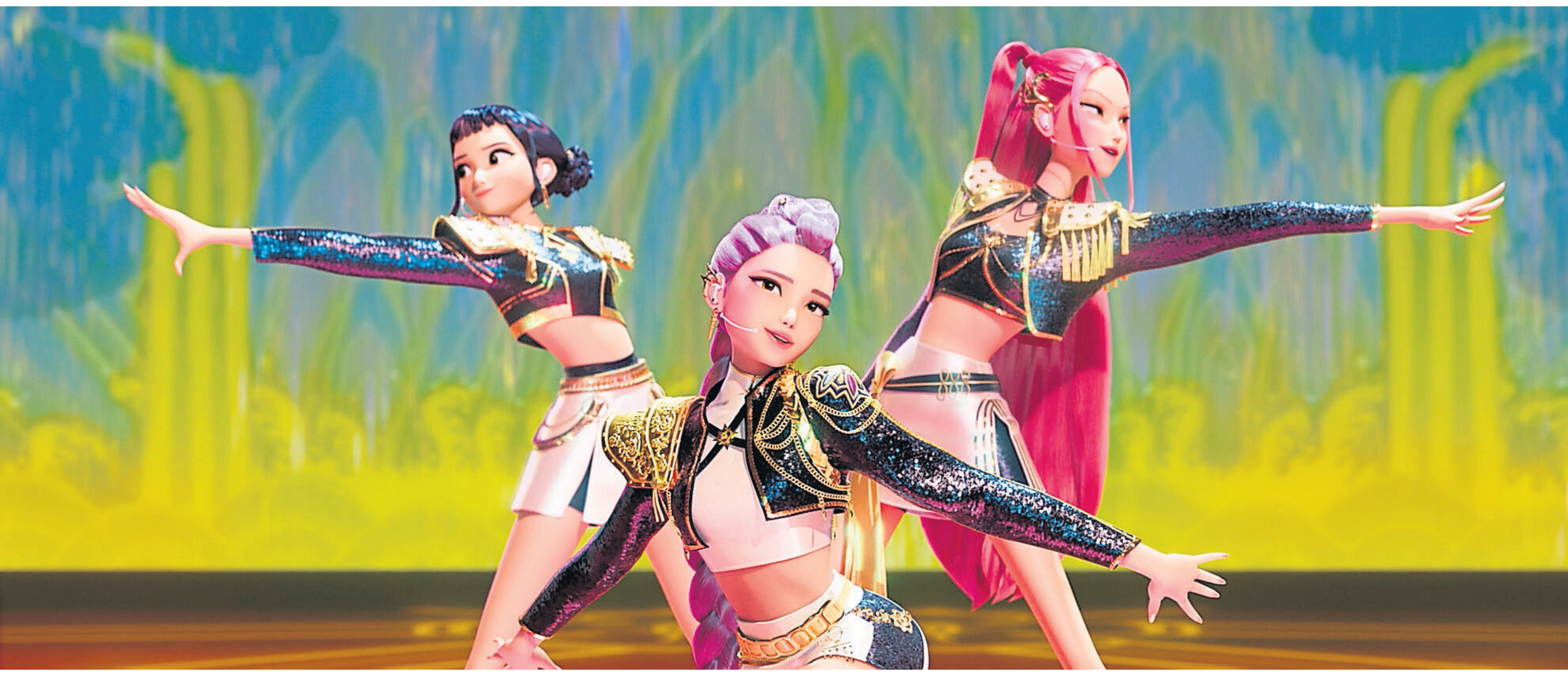
A: I saw them briefly backstage when they played in Cambridge [Massachusetts] at a place called The Club. But that wasn’t the real beginning of working with them. What really started it is that they had decided that they wanted to add a member a little later. It was actually Chris’s mother and father who knew Ernie Brooks with the Modern Lovers’ uncle and aunt in Pittsburgh. [Harrison had been in the Modern Lovers with Brooks previously.] And so they got Ernie Brooks’ phone number and then got my phone number and called me.

And then I went down to their loft on Chrystie Street, and we jammed a little bit. I came back down like a few weeks later and rehearsed. And then I played a show at the Lower Manhattan Ocean Club, and a show out in New Jersey. Actually, the pictures on “The Name of This Band is Talking Heads” that seem like they’re in a living room was that show. Second show I ever played with them.

Q: How do you see the legacy of this band, from the time you were together to today?

A: Well, it was hard to know; we certainly didn’t know at the beginning that it would have such a long-lasting effect. I think when I joined the band, I knew that it would be an artistic success. I had no idea what kind of commercial success it might have. I felt we were pretty left-field, but [with] a very unique way of creating music and looking at music.

We worked very hard at building our audience by touring relentlessly, and, you know, the audience got bigger and bigger. Then, when we sort of created the big band, basically in response to how many parts we had played ourselves on “Remain In Light,” we knew we had a show that was amazingly powerful.



Netflix / TNS

Despite viral claims to the contrary, the singing voices behind the characters Rumi, Mira and Zoey in "KPop Demon Hunters" are very much real.

In era of deep doubt, even ***'KPop Demon Hunters'*** is mistaken for AI

By LAURA YUEN
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Raise your hand if you've been questioning the veracity of real events, news stories and images posted on social media lately.

It used to be we'd have to tiptoe around a minefield of hoaxes only once a year, on April 1. But thanks to the proliferation of misinformation spawned by artificial intelligence, every day on the internet is an exercise in judgment and media literacy. This landscape of bot-generated clutter has also hardened us to become cynical about the truth.

Even the cultural juggernaut that is "KPop Demon Hunters" fell into this black hole of deep doubt. This summer's animated musical about an all-female K-pop band, Huntr/x, saving the world is the most popular Netflix movie of all time. It has also dominated the music charts. The soundtrack climbed to the top of the Billboard 200, and its inspirational single "Golden" is the No. 1 song in the country – an achievement it's held for seven weeks.

Yet the overwhelming popularity of the music led some to apparently assume that the performances were, well, done by robots. Over the summer, a user of the social platform X opined that the success of "Golden" amounted to a shift toward AI "completely taking over the music industry."

That post, viewed nearly 13 million times, launched plenty of online chatter, including a response from one of the three human musicians who sang vocals for the song. Rei Ami wrote, "EJAE, AUDREY NUNA AND I ARE NOT AI." She also asked if people were really that dumb.

Maybe not dumb. But confused. And who can blame them?

Nearly a third of all content on the internet is made by bots, according to cybersecurity firm Cloudflare. Known as "AI slop," it can range from nonsensical talking kittens on YouTube to one-skillet dinner recipes on Pinterest that link to spam-filled blogs. Owners of "engagement-bait" accounts may churn out flat-out lies and draw high engagement, trick algorithms into boosting their visibility, and then sell the accounts to make money.

We also live in absurd times, where reality seems implausible. I remember thinking there is absolutely no way the president of the United States shared a social media post that said, "I love the smell of deportations in the morning." Or that he held a press conference in which he urged pregnant women to " fight like hell " through pain or sickness so as to avoid taking Tylenol. But those events actually happened.

Trump has embraced artificial intelligence to mock and satirize his opponents. Last week he shared a deep-fake video of Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer in a fabricated voice. And before Trump was reelected, he shared an AI-generated picture of Taylor Swift in an Uncle Sam outfit, implying she had endorsed him. (She did not.)

The "Demon Hunters" controversy fascinated Hannah Covington, a fan of the movie and its soaring vocals, who works for the national nonpartisan group the News Literacy Project.

"It's easy in the age of AI to dismiss something potentially as fake, or to even question true artistry, because we're surrounded by so much slop," she said. "This is what bad actors on the internet want. It's not to make you fall for just one untrue rumor or one untrue claim or one bad take on social media. It's to make you distrust everything."

Covington, a former reporter for the Minnesota Star Tribune, said the teenagers she works with in high schools on media literacy are wary about emerging technologies and realize much is at stake.

A 2024 survey commissioned by her organization found that 8 in 10 teens on social media reported seeing posts that spread or promoted conspiracy theories. Of those, 81 percent said they were inclined to believe one or more of them.

I'd argue that professional journalism is the antidote to the onslaught of fake news. But there is reason those in my industry should be terrified: Nearly half of the teens surveyed believed the press does more to harm democracy than protect it.

A separate poll spearheaded by Center for Youth and AI and YouGov found that most teens believe lawmakers should make it a top priority to address the potential pitfalls of artificial intelligence. The biggest threats they viewed were misinformation and deep fakes.

Public disillusionment with the information landscape can decimate democracy. If the audience cannot discern truth from fiction, it will make it even harder to hold public figures accountable when they're caught in the act.

Sometimes it makes for a good joke. Minnesota Lynx head coach Cheryl Reeve humorously denied that it was her dancing and partying with players Natisha Hiedeman and Courtney Williams, a viral moment that was captured on the StudBudz livestream at the WNBA All-Star weekend in July. The next morning after practice, Reeve reminded people that they shouldn't believe everything they see on the internet. "That was AI," she joked. "I was in bed."

But at its worst, a world where reality is indistinguishable from misinformation could mean people won't believe true events, and politicians can easily dismiss any unflattering information about them. Researchers describe this benefit to those who are doing the deceiving as the "liar's dividend."

In a pre-AI age, the public would press for damning video or audio evidence to prove a scandal actually happened. Now I worry that such evidence could be served up on a platter, and people would suspect the footage is fabricated.

Can you imagine if the nation shrugged after seeing the photograph of Emmett Till's young, mutilated Black body? Or if they cried "fake news" at the picture of the so-called napalm girl, Kim Phuc, running and screaming from an aerial attack during Vietnam? Sadly, some people could dismiss the fact that children are suffering in Gaza because bot-generated images being circulated about the crisis have eroded their trust in what they see.

"That's what scares me about this technology," Covington says. "It can be weaponized to shape and distort public opinion."

Covington urges young people consuming media to be skeptical but not cynical. If you have doubts about the information presented to you, search the internet and find credible sources. If you see a viral claim insisting your favorite soundtrack is the work of AI, wait for the movie credits and google the names of actors and musicians. Watch videos of them talking about the songwriting and recording process.

If you're still in doubt about the authenticity of "Kpop Demon Hunters," tune in Tuesday to "The Tonight Show With Jimmy Fallon." Ejae, Audrey Nuna and Rei Ami – the women behind the singing trio Huntr/x – are expected to sing "Golden" in their first-ever live TV appearance.

You'll see that there's a lot in this world to be skeptical about, but powerful, ear-catching pop is still alive, and very much real.

Laura Yuen is a columnist for The Minnesota Star Tribune.

SERIES REVIEW

'Boots' is a timely, if predictable, series depicting struggles of gay Marines

By ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

In "Boots," a new miniseries set in 1990, Miles Heizer plays Cameron Cope, a scrawny, bullied gay teenager who is out only to his best (and only) friend, Ray (Liam Oh). Ray, who is joining the Marines to make his disciplinarian but not unkind father proud, convinces Cam to join alongside him. (The recruiters sell a buddy system, which is a bit of a come-on.) Cam told his messy but not unkind mother, Barbara (Vera Farmiga), where he was going, but she wasn't listening.

Though the series, which premiered Thursday on Netflix and is based on Greg Cope White's 2016 memoir, "The Pink Marine," is novel as regards the sexuality of its main character, it's also essentially conventional – not a pejorative – and largely predictable. It's a classic Boot Camp Film, like "An Officer and a Gentleman," or Abbott and Costello's "Buck Privates," in which imperfect human material is molded through exercise, ego death and yelling into a better person, and it replays many tropes of the genre. And like most every military drama, it gathers diverse types into a not necessarily close-knit group.

Cam's confusion is represented by externalizing his inner voice into a double, "the angel on my shoulder and, honestly, sometimes the devil," with whom he argues, like a difficult imaginary friend. (It's the voice of his hidden gayness.) Where basic training stories like this usually involve a cocky or spoiled character learning a lesson about humbleness and teamwork, Cam is coming from a place of insecurity and fear. At first he wants to leave – he had expected nothing worse than "mud and some bug bites and wearing the same underwear two days in a row" – and plots to wash out; but he blows the chance when he helps a struggling comrade pass a test. He's a good guy. (Heizer is very fine in the part.)

Alfonso "Pompo" Bresciani / Netflix / TNS

Miles Heizer stars as Cameron Cope in Netflix's comedy drama "Boots."

Press materials describe "Boots," created by Andy Parker, as a comedic drama, although, after the opening scenes, there's not much comedy in it – even a food fight is more stressful than funny. Using "Also Sprach Zarathustra" as the soundtrack to a long-in-coming bowel movement – I just report the news – was already dated and exhausted in 1990, and is bizarrely out of joint with the rest of the production. "Boots" isn't anywhere near as disturbing as, say, "Full Metal Jacket" – which Ray told Cam to watch to prepare, though he opted for a "Golden Girls" marathon instead. But it makes no bones about the fact that these kids are being trained to kill. "Kill, kill, blood makes the grass grow," they chant, and "God, country, Corps, kill." And sometimes just, "Kill, kill, kill." And things do turn violent, sometimes for purposes of training and sometimes because someone just goes off his head.

Still, that Cam survives, and, after a period of adjustment, thrives (that's not a spoiler, Cope White lived to write the book) makes this, strictly speaking, a comedy. (And, by implication, an endorsement of the program.) "We're killing our old selves so we can be our best selves," he'll say to Ray. The Marines may make a man of him, but it won't be a straight man.

Rhythmically, "Boots" follows scenes in which someone will break a little or big rule – I suppose in the Marines, all rules are big, even the little ones – with some sort of punishment, for an individual or the platoon. Laid across this ostinato are various storylines involving recruits working out the issues that have brought them to this Parris Island of Misfit Boys. Cody (Brandon Tyler Moore) was taught by his father to look down on his twin brother, John (Blake Burt), who is in the same outfit, because he's fat. Slovacek (Kieron Moore), a bully, has been given a choice between prison and the military. Mason (Logan Gould) can barely read. Santos (Rico Paris) is slowed down by a bum knee. Ochoa (Johnathan Nieves) is a little too much in love with his wife. And Hicks (Angus O'Brien) is a chaos-relishing loon, having the time of his life. Obviously, not everyone who joins the Marines is compensating for something; Nash (Dominic Goodman), a more or less balanced character who seems to be sending Cameron signals, is there to pad his resume in case he runs for president one day; but he'll have his moment of shame.

Though they all raise their voices and get in people's faces, the drill instructors do come in various flavors. Staff Sgt. McKinnon (Cedrick Cooper), the senior instructor, is imposing but obviously sane and sometimes kind; Sgt. Howitt (Nicholas Logan) is an unsettling sort who will prove to have some depth, while Sgt. Knox (Zach Roerig) is a twitchy racist, soon to be replaced by Sgt. Sullivan (Max Parker), tall, steely and tightly wound. He doesn't yell as loud as the others, but even his posture is intimidating. He focuses immediately on Cameron; make of that what you will. He's the series second lead, basically.

There are some respites from the training, the running and marching, the room full of tear gas, the dead man's float test, the hand-to-hand combat, the flower planting. (That part was nice, actually.) The yelling.

Ray winds up in sick bay, where he flirts with a female Marine. We get a few perfunctory glimpses of what the brass is like when they're out of uniform and quiet; it comes as a relief. McKinnon's wife is having a baby; he makes Cookie Monster noises on the phone for his son. Capt. Fajardo (Ana Ayora), "the first woman to lead a male company on Parris Island," is heard talking to her mother, presumably about her daughter's wedding: "I would rather not spend the time or the money because she can't live without love." Of her position, she observes that it "only took 215 years and a congressional mandate." McKinnon, who is Black, offers a brief history of Black people in the Marine Corps as lived by his forebears.

The social themes become more prominent in the second half, and we learn or are reminded just how toxic the military was to gay people, and how backward was its attitude. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" wasn't in effect until 1994, and it wasn't until 2011 that openly gay soldiers could serve. Now, as civil rights are being beaten back to … backwardness by small-minded politicians, there's a timely element to this perfectly decent, good-hearted, unsurprisingly sentimental miniseries.

BOOKS

Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic California architecture, as Hollywood filmed it

By JOHN METCALFE
The Mercury News (TNS)

Most folks know Frank Lloyd Wright as America's most influential architect. What's lesser known is he loved the movies, and Hollywood loved him.

"Wright was a big fan of the movies. He really admired Walt Disney, and even gave his staff advice on designing some of their most famous films in the 1930s and '40s," says Mark Anthony Wilson, an art historian and professor living in Berkeley. "And Hitchcock admired Wright, although they never communicated directly."

At least 20 feature-length movies have used Wright's buildings as set pieces in California alone. The earliest was 1933's "Female," a Warner Bros. production partly shot at a Wright house in the Hollywood Hills, and the latest is "DreamQuil," a yet-released thriller with John C. Reilly and Elizabeth Banks that uses the Marin County Civic Center. In between there've been movies both lauded and forgotten: Ridley Scott's "Blade Runner," Jackie Chan's "Rush Hour," Ben Stiller's "Permanent Midnight," the 1980s Bill Maher comedy "Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death."

Now people can read about Wright's connections to Hollywood thanks to Wilson's book published this summer, "Frank Lloyd Wright in the Movies: Iconic California Sites on Film" (The History Press, $25). The book details architecturally significant filming locations from L.A. to Carmel to the Bay Area, three of which are usually free for the public to visit.

The book contains contemporary, intimate scenes of Wright's buildings thanks to the involvement of San Francisco architecture photographer Joel Puliaitti. These are juxtaposed against documentary footage of how they appeared on film, preserved by Hollywood historian Marc Wanamaker's Bison Archives. There's even trivia about TV shows and music videos that featured the architect's work, like "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and Dr. Dre's 2011 single, "I Need a Doctor."

Wilson recently took the time to chat about Wright's interest in film, what drew famous directors to his architecture and how Wrightian motifs wound up in a Disney theme-park bathroom. (This interview was edited for brevity.)

Q: You've written books about architects Julia Morgan and Bernard Maybeck. What led you to consider Wright?

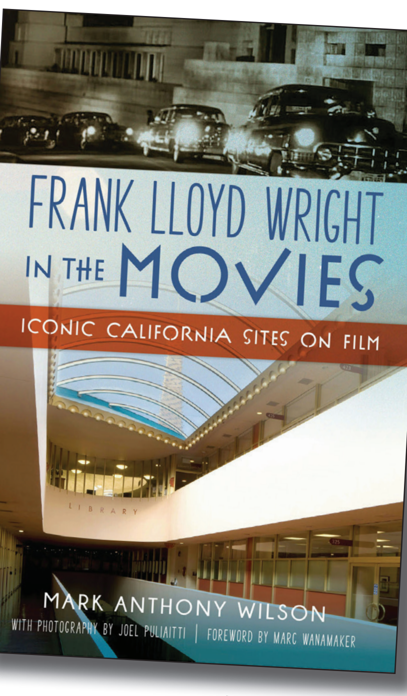
A: It originated in my living room during movie night with my family. My daughter and I were watching (1959's) "House on Haunted Hill." I suddenly sat upright when I noticed at the start of the film was the Ennis House in L.A., the largest single-family residence ever designed by Wright in terms of square footage. I said, "Pause, pause! What on earth made them pretend a Frank Lloyd Wright house would make a good setting for a haunted-house movie?"

Q: Do you have connections to the film industry?

A: My brother John J. B. Wilson is the founder of the Golden Raspberry Awards (aka the Razzies)…. Also, I was once a movie scout. It was a one-off thing in the early '80s for the movie "The Right Stuff." I picked the U.S. Custom House on Market Street in San Francisco, and they loved it, but they couldn't get permission so they never used it.

Q: What drew directors to Wright's work?

A: These houses just lend themselves to movies. Marc Wanamaker, a respected Hollywood historian who wrote the book's forward, summarized it in essence by saying these homes were so far ahead of their time even in the 1920s. Directors saw these dramatic visual effects that are so cinematic. And specifically for "Blade Runner," Ridley Scott once said: "Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural pattern strengthens the film's decadent and postmodern feel."


FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT IN THE MOVIES
ICONIC CALIFORNIA SITES ON FILM
LIBRARY
MARK ANTHONY WILSON
WITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOEL PULIAITTI | FOREWORD BY MARC WANAMAKER

Arcadia Publishing / TNS

Q: One house in particular, the Ennis House in L.A., has featured in at least 13 films. Tell us about this place?

A: That was the actual exterior for when Harrison Ford's character in "Blade Runner" pulls up to his apartment. It was in another Ridley Scott movie, "Black Rain," when Michael Douglas gets ready to go into a house with a yakuza boss. Then "Rush Hour" did it, and then the "The Replacement Killers" with an overlord-type crime boss. Many directors have used the Ennis House for powerful Asian characters, because they thought it had an Asian influence to it. But of course, that's not the style Wright thought of – he was thinking of Mayan-revival architecture.

Q: The Marin County Civic Center has starred in several sci-fi movies: 1997's "Gattaca," George Lucas' "THX 1138," Alex Prager's upcoming "DreamQuil." Why do you think that is?

A: The whole building evokes a futuristic feel. It's been called Space Age-style. It was produced in that era when the Seattle Space Needle was built, in a period with the idea of travel to other planets. It has a "needle" that was designed to be a radio-transmission tower, and it looks like a rocket launching off the building. There are lots of sweeping lines and the place has a modernistic feel – it was ahead of its time.

Q: Did Wright personally like to watch movies?

A: Oh, yes. He screened them for staff an average of once a week at Taliesin West (in Scottsdale, Arizona). You can still see the theater there. And he was friends for decades with Walt Disney. Both Wright and Disney had their own plans for perfectly planned communities. They knew of each other's ideas, and agreed that people shouldn't be crammed into overly crowded spaces.

Q: Somehow, Wright's designs wound up in a Disney bathroom?

A: At Disney California Adventure Park in Anaheim, the restroom facilities are based on the John Storer House in L.A. If you look at a photo of it, you'll see it's very similar. Wright might've found that ironic or somehow odd – but he wouldn't have objected.

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, Sept. 27, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. Alchemised. SenLinYu. Del Rey
2. The Secret of Secrets. Dan Brown. Doubleday
3. Tourist Season. Brynne Weaver. Slowburn
4. The Primal of Blood and Bone. Jennifer L. Armentrout. Blue Box
5. One Dark Window (deluxe ed.). Rachel Gillig. Orbit
6. Two Twisted Crowns (deluxe ed.). Rachel Gillig. Orbit
7. This Inevitable Ruin. Matt Dinniman. Ace
8. The Academy. Hilderbrand/Cunningham. Little, Brown
9. Circle of Days. Ken Follett. Grand Central
10. Anathema. Keri Lake. Bloom

Hardcover nonfiction

1. 107 Days. Kamala Harris. Simon & Schuster
2. The Let Them Theory. Mel Robbins. Hay House
3. Poems & Prayers. Matthew McConaughey. Crown
4. Awake. Jen Hatmaker. Avid Reader
5. Jump and Find Joy. Hoda Kotb. Putnam
6. Softly, as I Leave You. Priscilla Presley. Grand Central
7. The Biology of Trauma. Aimie Apigian. BenBella
8. Confronting Evil. O'Reilly/Hammer. St. Martin's
9. Good Things. Samin Nosrat. Random House
10. The Transformation Principles. Hemant Taneja. BenBella/Holt

Trade paperback

1. The Gingerbread Bakery. Laurie Gilmore. HarperCollins
2. The Surrogate Mother. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
3. Spellcaster. Jaymin Eve. Mira
4. Wild Card. Elsie Silver. Bloom
5. Remarkably Bright Creatures. Shelby Van Pelt. Ecco
6. The Tenant. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
7. Counting Miracles. Nicholas Sparks. Dell
8. The Housemaid. Freida McFadden. Grand Central
9. The Boyfriend. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
10. Do Not Disturb. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

REVIEW

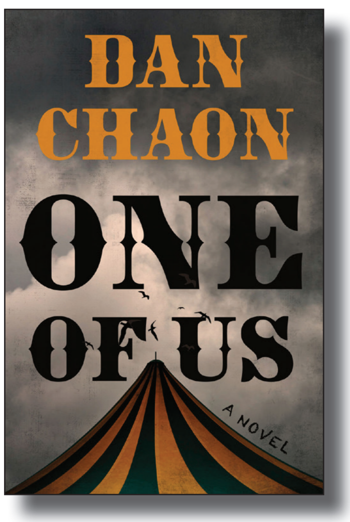
Orphans join the circus in 'One of Us,' in search of family

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

'I'd love to kill you sometime," murmurs a character in "One of Us," all but announcing the quiet, matter-of-fact evil that will drive him to pursue the book's protagonists over the next 200 pages.

Charlie is his name. Or, at least, that's what he calls himself but he also says he's the uncle of sister-and-brother escapees Eleanor and Bolt and we know for sure that isn't true. Whatever his name is, he's a violent criminal who murders strangers as if to relieve an itch, who is casually racist and who wants to possess the siblings because he believes they have supernatural gifts.

That's also why a traveling circus wants them in Dan Chaon's novel, which is set in the early 1900s. The adolescent siblings, who are orphans, flee from their uncle's "care" and fall in with a circus, where their extra-sensory abilities don't seem unusual when they're in the company of a little person who is said to be able to tell anyone when they will die, a muscle woman with a heart of gold and a bestial man who has somehow transformed from a huckster into a groaning monster who eats random chicken parts (not for nothing, the title "One of Us," quotes a line of dialogue from the classic, circus-set film "Freaks").



Henry Holt / TNS

If you're a reader, Chaon is a name you should know. He writes literary fiction, but he's attracted to dark undercurrents of humanity in a way that will ring bells with Stephen King fans (or fans of Ray Bradbury, who also liked circus settings and who's one of several writers to whom "One of Us" is dedicated).

Probably because they're the most vulnerable among us, children are often in danger in Chaon's books, which include "Await Your Reply," in which a girl believes she's in love with her teacher; " Sleepwalk ," in which an unscrupulous man agrees to deliver a package that turns out to be an infant; and "Ill Will," which I'd call his best novel. It's about the aftermath of a massacre and it's so claustrophobic that it made a friend of mine swear off Chaon forever.

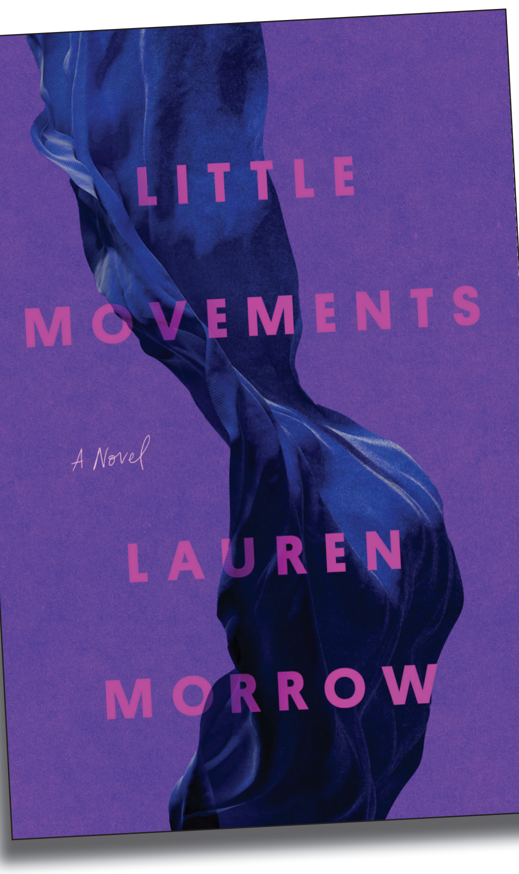
With its creepy setting and matter-of-fact violence, I don't think "One of Us" is the Chaon book to change her mind. But she is missing out on gorgeous writing like this description of the sibling's late (and, because this is Chaon, neglectful) mother: "Their mother was a butcher's daughter with a lovely timid voice, a tinklebell sigh of soft misery." She's missing humor like this take-down of the kids' would-be guardian: "The smell of Uncle Charlie's breath suggested that he'd had sardines and beer for dinner at a pub, then smoked cigars and drank whiskey for a while, then vomited in a ditch while he was stumbling home in the rain." And on insights like this one into the darkness in (some) people's hearts: "Most people expect cruelty as the normal order of things, but for poor Lacis, it is a constant shock, he has always believed in the essential goodness of people."

Chaon, on the other hand, does not seem to be surprised by terrible behavior. Atmosphere is crucial to his books, and it's usually a combination of hope and page-turning dread (the first half of "One of Us" is so propulsive that it may be inevitable that the second half lags a bit).

Like all of his work, "One of Us" acknowledges the dark forces that challenge the goodness in his characters. That's why his books are so gripping: Good and evil are in constant battle and it's not at all clear which will win.

REVIEW

Black artist wants to be valued for her art in 'hilarious' novel



Random House / TNS

By SHANNON GIBNEY
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

'Little Movements" Lauren Morrow's smart, incisive and hilarious debut, is an ode to the creative process and to people everywhere who feel the pull to take a risk and try something new.

I have never read a book quite like this one, about the professional choreographic world, and featuring a deeply conflicted, 30-something, sardonic, Black female protagonist. It's been awhile since I enjoyed a book so much, and found myself laughing out loud at the absurdity and truth – the truth of the absurdity – in the world Morrow concocts. Dare I say this is an experience many readers need, especially right now?

Layla Smart has been mostly happily married to an unsuccessful white screenwriter-turned-IT-guy in Brooklyn when she receives an offer for a residency at Briar House, an exclusive (and very white) dance center in rural Vermont. Although she and her husband Eli are nervous about being apart, they agree (at least on the surface) that she has to take it.

Once there, she meets Margot, the controlling artistic director of Briar House – an older white woman who is at once overly invested in the success of Layla's work, and doggedly focused on its "Black" aspects. As the story and Layla's residency progress, we learn Briar House is not what it presents itself to be, and neither is Eli.

"There weren't many opportunities for escape in adulthood. That had been part of the appeal of Briar House, time away from everything," Layla says. "I had felt like I'd figured out a loophole when I signed the paperwork. But now – chilled to the bone, cheeks chapped, belly full, mind bent, heart broken – Briar House felt like a disaster."

Layla is at times ambivalent about the role of her Blackness in her art. This is a topic I rarely see explored in fiction in such a nuanced way, reflecting the complexity of institutional investment in appearing "anti-racist," how funding and opportunities are often tied to a certain performance of race, and the racial anxieties and contradictions these pressures exert on Black artists.

After discovering the real reason she was awarded the residency, Layla muses, "It was time to cleanse their palate with a Black artist. Something that spoke to the current moment. Now that Briar House had reached financial stability, they needed to show they were in step with the zeitgeist."

When the board is confronted with their negligence and racism, Morrow writes that they "had nothing real to say. Harold apologized for the way everything had unfolded…They were all disappointed, but it had been a matter of Briar House surviving or not… But we should all rest assured – the board planned to make a donation to the ACLU on behalf of the organization."

I cracked up when I read this, recognizing the tepid convictions most institutions espouse when they find themselves in a racist corner they cannot easily get out of. I imagine every Black and brown artist has experienced some version of this at some point in their career.

In the end, this short, focused novel – by a woman who used to do public relations for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater – asks each of us to explore the artistic visions that may have eluded us, through the clouded view of our fears and attachments. It beautifully (and amusingly) asks us to acknowledge the pitfalls the illusion of stability engenders, in order to embrace a fuller, more courageous life.

AUTOMOTIVE

AUTO REVIEWS

2025 Mazda MX-5 Miata celebrates 35 years of fun in the sun

By MARC D. GRASSO
Boston Herald (TNS)

As Mazda enters Grasso's Garage for a slice review pie, they bring their longtime, consumer loving convertible to soak up the sun as this 3-season small but fun 2-seater is here to stay.

Powered by a 181 horsepower naturally aspirated 2.0-liter 4-cylinder, our 35th anniversary edition boasted a 6-speed manual transmission which was all the craze as the gears were fun to fly through our rear-wheel drive version.

Coming in with a base price of $37,485 on their top model and boasting 7-exterior color options, the MX-5 delivered nicely with 5 interior color options. Easy to use infotainment system, powerful engine, swiftly usable convertible top makes the MX-5 fit for many consumers.

On its 4th generation, and most recent refresh in 2016, the MX-5 Miata has a long lasting following that has kept consumers in play mode since 1989. Originally, with pop-up headlights and British inspired styling, then onto a more aerodynamic design but with more power. In 2006, the optional retractable hardtop and lengthier chassis, while in 2016 the Skyactiv-2.0 and even more aggressive design.

Although exceptionally tiny on the inside, and very cockpit-like for the driver, this fun in the sun convertible boasts what every speed racer raves about; low to the ground, tight but smooth handling and 2-passenger thrill riding fun. While similar to the discontinued Honda S2000 in its day, this is a force to mess with. It had a lot of qualities that consumers demanded while still maintaining good sales in the fleet for many years.

Although as a full-framed 6'1" male, I had a hard time fitting in the MX-5 comfortably. Clearly designed for thinner and/or shorter people, the MX-5 was fun and certainly its best generation to date and most deserving for compact convertible accolades.

2025 Mazda MX-5 35th Anniversary

MSRP: $37,485

MPG: 26 city / 34 highway / 29.7 as tested

As Tested: $37,485

Mazda / TNS

The 2025 Mazda MX-5 is powered by a 181 horsepower naturally aspirated 2.0-liter 4-cylinder.

Vanilla no more, Subaru Forester Wilderness goes wild

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

The Forester used to be vanilla in Subaru's delicious store of off-road flavors. No more.

My white 2026 Forester Wilderness swaggered up to the foothills of the Cascade Mountains sporting a chocolate grille, syrup-black hood decal, bold lines, chiseled rocker panels and sinewy Yokohama Geolander all-terrain tires.

Forester Vanilla just got a healthy shot of Chunky Monkey.

I nailed the throttle and the rugged 'Ru clawed up a dirt trail flinging chocolate chips – er, gravel – behind it. To my right the trail was bordered by a sheer drop into the valley below. Forester dispelled my acrophobia. Geolander A/Ts gripped the slippery surface and we charged on while drinking in the breathtaking view.

Along with Jeep, Subaru pioneered the off-road SUV space with standard all-wheel-drive machines that can go anywhere all the time. That fundamental goodness has won over generations of fans who confess undying loyalty to 'Ru even as other brands have begun to crowd the shelves with their own affordable off-road flavors. Badges like Toyota RAV-4 TRD, Honda CR-V TrailSport, Mazda CX-50 Meridian, Nissan Rogue Rock Creek, and, most significantly, Ford Bronco Sport Badlands.

Bronco Jr. has stomped into the segment sporting Ford's full off-road arsenal: all-terrain tires, ubiquitous storage cubbies, sub-rear-seat storage, twin-bicycle-friendly cargo bay, twin-rear clutch packs, and a 250-horse turbo-4 mill. Go to the head of the class, Sport.

Curiously, the Jeep Cherokee didn't show up for the popular compact segment in model years 2024-25 – and Forester Wilderness is jumping in with all fours.

If the subcompact Crosstrek looks like a running shoe and the midsize Outback is a hiking boot, the Forester has been a ... shoebox.

Square, tall and roomy, it lacked the personality of its teammates even as it offered excellent all-season utility, interior ergonomics, even a sippy hybrid model. The Wilderness edition brings the wardrobe to match its off-road capabilities. I mean, just look at those bronze tow hook/roof rail highlights and Wolverine-like front fascia lamb chops that complement its big claws.

Those claws are assisted by a front skid plate to protect the jaw, and a 9.2-inch ride height so I could sail over pointy rocks and splash across creek beds.

Those athletic attributes outside are mirrored with digital tech inside. I kept a window open in the digital instrument display to monitor tire pressure (35 pounds) as I charged across the rocky landscape. Get a flat tire? A handy spare is right underneath the rear hatch.

Never mind off-roading out West; I'd recommend the Forester Wilderness as a daily driver for Metro Detroit, where the always-under-construction roads can feel like the Cascade trails. WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP! How many low-profile wheels have I scarred across Motown's lunar landscape? Better to have tall-sidewall Geolanders at the ready. WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP!

Inside this little tank, Subaru has created a sanctuary from the mayhem outside.

Product chief Bill Stokes and his Jersey-based elves have outfitted Wolverine with gritty all-terrains that are quiet as a mouse in daily driving. How? By designing a new chassis from the ground up, with the Wilderness bruisers in mind – more welds, isolated wheel wells, cabin soundproofing.

On the way back into Portland from the Cascades – the Forester Wilderness caked with dirt 'n' dust – I sat in the back seat while a colleague took the wheel and quickly forgot this was an off-roader while catching up with email and texts.

Forester's rear couch is palatial, a nice upgrade from Crosstrek, which is no slouch in the subcompact rear-room department. The big difference between the siblings is the front seat, however, as Forester affords a lot more headroom thanks to its upright A-pillar. Crosstrek looks like a running shoe thanks to its sloped S-pillar (as does hatchback cousin Impreza). The compromise is less headroom for giraffes like me.

That explains the Forester shoebox.

Forester Wilderness brings its off-road mission to the interior as well. Door storage is designed with tall water bottles in mind – the door armrests abbreviated so you easily slip in tall flasks. I recently piloted an off-road-focused, $52K Hyundai Palisade XRT-Pro to New York and back and struggled with its shallow door storage.

The Subie's rear door inserts are similarly thoughtful. For its sixth gen, the center console has been redesigned for better storage: seat heaters are now in the screen, cupholders enlarged, the front phone charger more accessible. That phone charger – standard on all Foresters – is more important than ever as passengers use their phones' Google Maps to navigate to the far reaches of, say, Oregon. Or Michigan.

Also standard is the 11.5-inch vertical screen, now common to Subies across the lineup. With its big graphics and complementary buttons for volume and climate control, it is easy to navigate. Even better is the steering wheel (highlighted by a bronze insert so you know it's a Wilderness model), which is smartly designed with raised volume and adaptive cruise controls so you never need take your eye off the road. Or off-road.

This being a performance-focused Forester, Subaru has outfitted it with shift paddles behind the wheel should the droning automatic transmission ever drive you nuts. I found the paddles as useful as shoes for a fish. Armed with 178 pound-feet of torque and 180 horsepower, Forester's 2.5-liter flat-4 engine has a tall task.

That task includes competing with the Bronco Sport Badlands, which brings significantly more capability. Its shift paddles are actually fun given the Badland's substantial 280 pound-feet of torque and more sophisticated eight-speed transmission. Feel adventurous? Take the Bronc Jr. to Holly Oaks ORV Park in Holly and it will do doughnuts in the sand thanks to its rear twin clutch pack. Ooooooh.

That's some serious off-road cred from the Ford. Heck, the Subie's 180 horses are just enough to keep up with the base Bronc's 180-horse turbo-3. The Sport Badlands' 250-horse turbo-4 is in another league.

Which is here the Forester's upgraded curb appeal is so important. It looks like a proper Subie dirt-kicker to go with its more affordable sticker – a meaningful $2,500 cheaper than the Ford. That, and it tows 800 pounds more than the Ford, expanding the Ru's demographic. Subaru opened the door to compact SUV off-road capability, and Ford has rushed in. So will the Jeep Cherokee as it returns to market over the next couple of years with a trail-focused variant.

Rugged looks, off-road utility, towing, and ... oh, yes, there is one more 'Ru feature Forester is counting on: reliability. With a top rating from Consumer Reports, it boasts better grades than segment classmates.

Reward that 'Ru with a Chunky Monkey ice cream.

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

2026 Subaru Forester Wilderness

★★★

Vehicle type: Front-engine, all-wheel-drive, five-passenger SUV

Price: $42,035, including $1,450 destination fee

Powerplant: 2.5-liter inline-4 cylinder

Power: 180 horsepower, 178 pound-feet of torque

Transmission: Continuously-variable automatic

Performance: 0-60 mph, 8.0 seconds est. (Car and Driver); towing, 3,500 pounds

Weight: 3,675 pounds

Fuel economy: EPA, 24 mpg city/28 highway/26 combined; range, 465 miles

Report card

Highs: Rugged looks; appealing interior

Lows: Lacks performance, interior features lag competitors

Photos by Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

TECHNOLOGY

2025's best smart speakers

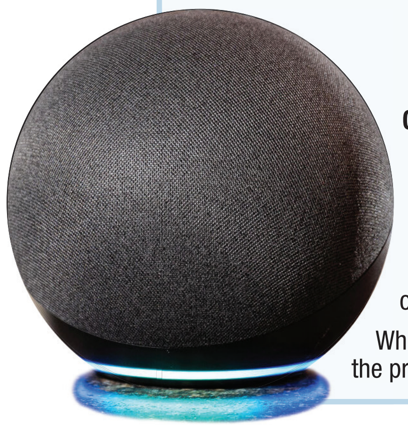
By CNET.COM (TNS)

Smart speakers can do a lot more than just play music. These intelligent gadgets can act as personal assistants, home hubs, alarm clocks and party co-hosts. Each has its specialty – which means you need to pick the right model for your smart home.

At CNET, we've tested all the latest connected smart speakers from brands including Amazon, Google Nest and Apple, as well as more audio-focused models from Sonos and Bose. We've talked to their voice assistants, linked our home technology and played their music in every room in our homes.

These are the models we recommend, based on our experience with what each one does best.

The following CNET staff contributed to this story: CNET Editors Ty Pendlebury and Tyler Lacoma, and Managing Copy Editor Nick Hide. For more reviews of personal technology products, please visit www.cnet.com.



Amazon Echo (4th Gen)

Best smart speaker overall

CNET TAKE: Amazon Echo speakers are among the most affordable and easy-to-set-up smart speakers out there. That's why the fourth-gen Amazon Echo is our pick for the top smart speaker overall. It packs very solid sound for such a compact device, and Alexa has the best smart home compatibility of all the voice assistants. It's also a breeze to connect popular music streaming apps such as Spotify or simply stream via Bluetooth.

I've used it for parties, cooking help, reminders and more, and it remains one of my top recommendations, if you're OK with a few privacy quirks. What helps the Echo clinch first place is its sound quality: This speaker offers loud, room-filling sound with plenty of clarity and bass control.

While there are even better-sounding speakers, such as the Sonos Era line and the Echo Studio, neither can beat the price of the Echo at $100, making it the best all-round pick.

Amazon Echo Dot (5th Gen)

Best budget smart speaker

CNET TAKE: Budget smart speakers don't come any more feature-packed than the fifth-gen Amazon Echo Dot. It offers a wealth of capabilities, including a temperature sensor, an Eero mesh extender and the ability to bop it like an alarm clock. That makes it an excellent choice for tapping into other smart systems you may have around the house, and for only $50.

The Dot also sounds better than other speakers at this price, including the Echo Pop and Google's Nest Mini, with plenty of vocal clarity and decent bass weight. Its microphones are sensitive enough to hear you from across the room, even with another speaker playing.

Google Nest Mini (2nd Gen)

Best Google Assistant speaker

CNET TAKE: Google has done an admirable job of catching up to Amazon in the smart speaker race. At this point, picking between the lowest-priced smart speaker devices from the two companies comes down to splitting hairs.

The $50 Google Nest Mini is a solid alternative to the Amazon Echo Dot if Google Assistant is your preference, with a similar price. Our tests have shown that Google Assistant (soon to be replaced by the more conversational Gemini) responds more flexibly to voice commands if you can't remember the exact name of your smart home devices. It's generally more knowledgeable about things you'd find on the internet.

Overall, Google has the intelligence edge, and the Google Nest Mini is a great, low-cost way to take advantage of those smarts. While the Nest Mini may not have as many additional features as the Echo Dot (for now), it does boast one important feature that the Dot doesn't: a built-in option to mount on a wall and save space, such as by a desk or in a kitchen nook. The Dot may have the slight edge in sound quality, though.

GADGETS

Open-ear buds offer crisp sound

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Open-ear true wireless earbuds have made quite an impression since their recent arrival – and I'm officially a fan. For the latest pair I received for testing, the OpenRock S2 open-ear air conduction sport earbuds, I brought in a friend who had never tried open-ear buds before. Here are some of his thoughts.

These earbuds could be a welcome addition – or complement – to your collection of music/talk devices. As the name implies, they are both truly wireless, sync via Bluetooth 6.0, and feature an open-ear style.

Open ear means what it says: You will clearly hear both what you've selected to play and the sounds around you. Users new to this style will soon learn that neither interferes with the other – the sound keeps playing as traffic, dogs, etc. pass by.

They are feather-light (7 grams), an essential feature for the sports angle. Once correctly installed, they use a hook clip that slides effortlessly over and then behind your ear. The clip keeps the buds in place and centers the speakers inside your ear for the best reception.

Enhancing the sports aspect are design features intended for the active user: They're made of irritant-free silicone, triple sweat-proof and IPX5-rated waterproof. The 4-microphone has AI noise cancellation. During testing, multiple conversations in gusty winds were clear with no drops on both ends.

Once you're comfortable with the basics, or before, download the OpenRock app. There, you'll find an extensive menu to customize your experience. There are four basic modes: boom, rock, relax and custom. There's more: you can select spatial sound, balance, multi-point connection (two devices) and even find my buds through the app.

The sound is crisp, boosted at the bottom by BassDirect chambers, which also keep out perspiration and moisture. Once properly fit and adjusted, the sound was as good as many more expensive products.

If you want, you can choose the over-time reminder, which will prompt you to "Take a Rest."

Through the pebble-style storage/charging case, users can charge the earbuds for 8 hours of use on a single charge, and up to 32 additional hours from the fully charged case. Fast charging (5 minutes) earns you an hour of usage to finish your workout.

https://www.openrock.com/products/openrock-s2-open-ear-air-conduction-sport-earbuds $69.99 available in moonlight white and obsidian black

* * *

The Soundcore Sleep A30 earbuds are so good, they did exactly what they were designed to do – they put me to sleep.

Earbuds designed for sleeping can have the best sound in the world with endless features, but if they aren't comfortable, they won't work. With the A30, the functionality is outstanding. But what sold me right out of the box, before they were even turned on, was the fit with their small form factor. As a side sleeper (and a bad one), I've never found earbuds that fit perfectly while I'm ing to fall asleep. Th is, until I tried these.

OpenRock / TNS

True to their description, they have an ultra-comfortable ergonomic design and offer users all-night peace from noisy environments. With their slim profile, they do not protrude outside of your ear and are of no distraction on either side. For my whole week of testing, they stayed in place and were in my ears when the sun rose.

The sound and built-in technology of the A30s are a perfect match for comfort. Leading the way is active noise cancellation. If ANC was ever necessary, it's when you want to sleep, and the A30s have Smart ANC.

Now, outside noise, such as traffic, a neighbor's car door, a dishwasher, and even your spouse snoring right next to you, is almost entirely blocked out. The Smart ANC will block out up to 30dB of external noise according to Soundcore and will also adjust masking audio in real-time. A double-tap on the right earbuds turns the Smart ANC on or off.

The A30's Adaptive Snore Masking technology detects snoring and its accompanying sawing wood sounds by analyzing ambient noise in real time. They then produce noise-masking audio to help block out distractions. They are designed to recognize over 500 snoring patterns through AI algorithms.

The audio library within the Soundcore app for the C30 has category choices of brainwave audio, snore masking and white noise.

These have features that go far beyond what typical earbuds do, especially while trying loved was the ability to shut the audio off when the A30s detected I had fallen asleep. Settings give you the choice of shutting the auto off or switching to local audio; I chose white noise.

Apps are commonplace for audio accessories, but they're not often used. In this case, with the A30s and their companion app, it's a must-have and easy to navigate. The audio library offers several options for white noise and other sounds, so you'll want to choose what works best for you.

The app (Android and iOS) features sleep position, duration tracking and sleep monitoring, along with notifications and other features to help you get a restful night of sleep.

One charge of the A30s will yield 9 hours of playback with ANC on, and up to 45 hours with the storage/charging case. Another interesting feature I've found helpful is that if the earbuds are taken out in your sleep or fall out and get mixed up in the sheets, fall on the floor, etc., the Sleep A30s uses the Find My Earbud feature by playing an audible alert through the Soundcore app.

With the fitting being critical, you get three pairs of memory foam ear tips, four pairs of silicone ear tips, and three pairs of ear wings to ensure the right fit for sleeping.

https://www.soundcore.com/products/d1301-sleep-a30-smart-anc-earbuds-for-sleeping $229.99, available in moonlit white or mist green

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

Soundcore / TNS

Streaming TV: Signing up for your first subscription

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Last week I wrote about helping a friend set up streaming TV for the first time.

If you've never experienced streaming TV, there can be a lot of nuances that might not be the easiest to understand until you see them for yourself.

Some streaming sources are free with ad-supported content, but many are going to require an ongoing subscription.

Now is a good time to talk about terminology.

On a Roku TV, you'll see streaming sources like Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime and HBO Max, which we know to be streaming sources. Roku may also call these streaming apps or streaming channels. These are all terms that mean the same thing.

Let's say you want to try Netflix. If it is not on your Roku home screen, you can navigate to the left side column of the Roku home screen and choose Streaming Store.

There you can see popular apps you can add to your Roku home screen. There is also a search there for adding apps you can't see on the main page.

Once the app is on your Roku home screen, you can open it by navigating to it with the arrow keys and pressing the OK button.

The first time you launch Netflix, it will ask you to sign in with your Netflix credentials.

Your two options are Sign in and Sign Up.

If you don't have a Netflix account, you'll need to sign up. You'll need to sign up at Netflix.com on a web browser on your computer or sign up through the Netflix app on your phone or tablet. If you choose Sign Up, you'll be asked for your cell phone number. Enter it and you'll get a text with a link to sign up online.

Trust me, you'd much rather do things like type your email address and create a password on a big keyboard rather than trying to type by using arrow keys on your TV remote to navigate around a small on-screen keyboard.

You can choose your Netflix subscription level. The cheapest plan includes ads and it costs $7.99 per month. You can lose the ads with the standard plan for $17.99 per month. Both of these plans allow you to watch in 1080P high definition on two devices at the same time, so you and your kids could be watching different Netflix shows at the same time.

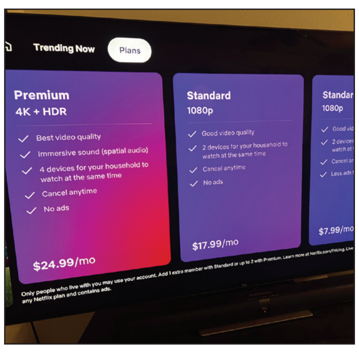
There is also a subscription level that includes 4K streaming and the ability to watch four streams at once for $24.99.

Once you have set up your Netflix account on the computer or phone or tablet, you can return to the TV and click the Sign In button on Netflix.

One last thing to remember: If you sign up for any streaming service and don't like it or find you don't watch as much as you thought you would, you can always cancel it. There is no contract, it's a month-to-month subscription.

The friend I helped is an Amazon Prime customer, which includes Prime Video, so I set him up to link his Amazon account to the Prime Video app on his Roku TV. Prime Video is a bit different, as most people who watch are Amazon Prime customers so they don't pay a separate monthly subscription fee; their cost is rolled into their annual or monthly Prime membership.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.



Jim Rossman / TNS

Netflix sign-up screen.

DESIGN RECIPES

MODERN RETRO LIGHTING

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

One of the easiest ways to bring personality and history into a modern space is through lighting. Antique or so called "old-fashioned fixtures" add warmth, character, and craftsmanship that one often can't find in a modern fixture. Whether it's a sparkling chandelier, a pair of vintage sconces, or even a retro floor lamp, lighting can help tell a story.

When you mix older style lighting pieces with sleek modern furnishings, the result feels fresh and unexpected. Instead of competing, the old and new help to create a sense of rhythm and balance, creating a space that looks layered and timeless.

Looking for ways to incorporate a bit of vintage charm using lighting? Here are 10 top tips:

■ Consider a vintage chandelier to help anchor a space such as an entry, gallery or dining room to add instant grandeur.

■ Look for antique sconces to bring depth and character to modern walls.

■ Add a retro floor lamp to infuse a minimalist space with a sense of history and charm.

■ Pair ornate antique lighting with rich textiles like velvet or leather for a luxurious feel.

■ Frame your bedside tables with antique sconces or small chandeliers for a sense of formality and elegance.

■ Treat a bold antique fixture as functional art that doubles as a conversation piece.

■ Mix metals thoughtfully by pairing antique brass or bronze with contemporary finishes such as nickel or chrome.

■ Use antique pendants in hallways, foyers or stairwells to add charm to transitional spaces.

■ Highlight ornate fixtures by pairing them in the same space with those that are modern to create a sense of modernity and balance.

■ Layer antique lighting with recessed or modern lamps to create depth and balance.

Cathy Hobbs is the owner of Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, a home staging company based in New York City (www.cathyhobbs.com). She is also the owner of Highland Passive House, a Home Staging + Design Center based in New York's Hudson Valley (www.highlandpassivehouse.com). Cathy's practical, how-to design advice can also be found in her book, "Home Design Recipes."

Handout photos / TNS

A sense of grandeur is achieved in this dining room with the help of vintage and antique style lighting.

A modern, luxurious feel is achieved in this bedroom with the help of timeless, yet elegant lighting.

LEFT: Antique style lighting adds an elegant touch above a bedside nightstand. **ABOVE:** A retro style floor lamp is paired with antique style lighting in this sitting room. **RIGHT:** A vintage chandelier is paired with older aesthetic sconces in a dining room.

How can I keep my bathroom spotless?

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

Few rooms in your home work harder than the bathroom. It's where you wake up, wind down and get yourself presentable for the world. But with constant moisture, heavy traffic and a steady parade of products, it's also one of the fastest places to get dirty. Ignore it for too long, and you'll find soap scum, mildew and odors moving in like bad roommates.

The trick is knowing when to clean what. Not every job needs your attention every day or week, but the ones that do should stay on your radar. Set the right bathroom cleaning schedule and you'll never be more than a few minutes away from a bathroom that looks, smells and feels fresh.

Weekly tasks are your bread and butter. The sink requires a lot of attention, as a prime breeding ground for bacteria, toothpaste splatter and residue. Once a week, wipe it with an all-purpose cleaner, paying extra attention to the drain, faucet base and under the rim. While you're there, clean the countertop, even if it looks clear. Dust and moisture collect in the corners, and keeping ahead of it makes a big difference.

The toilet needs equal attention. A weekly scrub keeps it from becoming a germ magnet. Use a disinfecting cleaner on the bowl, seat, lid and every exterior surface.

Your tub and shower deserve the same treatment. Soap scum and mineral deposits build up faster than you think, especially if you have hard water. Spray and scrub all surfaces, clean bottles and racks, and clear away water spots on glass doors. The more often you do it, the easier it is to maintain.

Floors and trash are easy wins. Sweep or dry mop your bathroom floor first to collect hair and dust, then mop with hot water and cleaner. Empty the trash weekly and wipe down the can to prevent lingering odors. Wash towels, mats and washcloths at least once a week (and more often than that, if they get heavy use or they're in humid rooms where they don't dry quickly.) Don't forget the mirror. A quick glass cleaner pass gives you a streak-free view of all your hard work.

Some chores can wait a little longer, but they're still important. Once a month, wash the walls to clear away moisture buildup, dust and product residue. Go through cabinets and drawers, tossing expired products and wiping down shelves. Wash your shower curtain and liner monthly to stop mildew before it starts.

Grout and caulk deserve special care. Mildew loves to hide there, so scrub with a grout cleaner or diluted bleach and a small brush. Check your ventilation fan, since dust and sticky residue from humid air can slow it down. Wipe or vacuum the cover and blades so it works efficiently. If you have a jetted tub, clean the jets monthly to prevent buildup from getting pumped back into your bathwater.

Day-to-day upkeep is quick and painless. Put away items left on the counter, wipe up water spots as they happen, and keep an eye on supplies like soap and toilet paper. These small moves cut down your deep-cleaning time.

If it still feels like more than you can handle, a professional cleaning service can save the day. Standard cleanings for an average home run $120 to $235, while a deep clean can climb higher.

You can save money by doing simple upkeep yourself and bringing in the pros for big or unpleasant jobs. Whether you clean it all yourself or get help, the secret is consistency. The cleaner you keep it, the less effort it takes.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

Jacqueline Perez

Your tub and shower deserve the same treatment. Soap scum and mineral deposits build up faster than you think, especially if you have hard water. Spray and scrub all surfaces, clean bottles and racks, and clear away water spots on glass doors.

TRAVEL

Cape Fear River in Southport, North Carolina.
Dreamstime / TNS

U.S. coastal towns that still feel *undiscovered*

By NOREEN KOMPANIK
TravelPulse (TNS)

Nancy Ziller / Dreamstime / TNS

Mendocino California is known for its dramatic ocean views.

The U.S. is home to so many coastal gems where tranquility meets untouched beauty. The joy of these smaller, hidden havens is that they provide all the benefits of a pristine paradise without the crowds, offering a charming and much slower pace of life.

From the east coast to the west and on to the Hawaiian Islands, these are places that are less visited, out-of-the-way and still virtually undiscovered.

Kapa'a, Kauai

The truly final-remaining authentic spot left on Hawaii's Garden Isle, Kapa'a has preserved its charm in its mom-and-pop style featuring an incredible collection of local businesses that dot the Royal Coconut Coast on Kauai's more under-the-radar East End. Visitors will find small shops, local art galleries, Hawaiian craft stores and family-owned restaurants and food trucks, instead of big-name resorts.

Kealia Beach is a long, sandy beach popular for surfing and sunbathing, Lydgate Beach Park just south of town is great for families and snorkeling thanks to protected lagoons and the Kapa'a Bike Path (Ke Ala Hele Makalae) offers a coastal multi-use path with scenic ocean views, great for biking or walking.

Mendocino, California

The wild, untamed paradise located on the northern California coast is known for its dramatic ocean views, artsy vibe and peaceful small-town charm. Though its only about 3-4 hours north of San Francisco, Mendocino feels a world away – quiet, foggy, and surrounded by rugged natural beauty.

The town sits on bluffs above the Pacific Ocean with spectacular cliffside scenery and the charming downtown historic district is filled with Victorian buildings, galleries and locally owned shops and restaurants. Nearby, visitors can explore waterfalls, hiking trails, dramatic coastal rock formations, redwoods, fern canyons and many more quiet nature and outdoor activities.

Bradenton, Florida

Dotted with pristine sugar-white beaches, turquoise waters, no high rises and smaller crowds, Bradenton flies below the usual radar in comparison to nearby Tampa or Sarasota. Visitors can experience the unspoiled beauty, rich history and easy pace of a real, authentic Florida beach town.

Anna Maria Island sits on the Gulf side with emerald green and azure waters offering toes-in-the-sand experiences. Historic Cortez Village is home to locally owned restaurants that blend traditional flavors from the Caribbean with the freshest of Florida ingredients. Bradenton is also home to the Village of the Arts, a whimsical community where local artists live and work.

Evergreen Coast, Washington

Washington state's Long Beach Peninsula is a place where the uniquely quirky spirit and lush natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest blend in a delightful way. The virtually undiscovered beach town with 28 miles of Pacific coastline is just a 3.5-hour drive from Seattle and 2.5 hours from Portland.

The region is home to six state parks, including one of the best in Washington, Cape Disappointment. With two functioning lighthouses, hiking trails, a camping park and stunning beach views, Long Beach Peninsula is a true coastal treasure. Pacific County produces 25 percent of the nation's oysters. Oysterville Sea Farms is the place to see the best oyster beds and watch the boats come in and out and Goose Point Family Farm and Oystery offers samplings and oysters for purchase.

Southport, North Carolina

You'll find no high-rises here or big-box stores. Rather, Southport, located just 40 minutes from Wilmington or Myrtle Beach offers local flavor, layered history, historic homes, sunset views and salty air, a place where time slows and you remember how to breathe.

Shrimp boats bob in the harbor, American flags flutter from pastel porches and old oak trees draped in Spanish moss offer cool shade. Though Hollywood found Southport's storybook setting in films like Safe Haven, I Know What You Did Last Summer and A Walk to Remember, the town remains blissfully free of large tourist crowds. Visitors can stroll the historic waterfront, browse indie galleries and antique shops and linger over fresh caught-seafood dishes.

Port Townsend, Washington

Situated at the northeastern tip of Washington's Olympic Peninsula, Port Townsend was once a renowned port of entry and lumber shipping hub. Though all that has changed, the town has managed to preserve its Victorian architecture, and its downtown and waterfront were deemed National Historic Landmarks.

Water Street features turn-of-the-century facades that house art galleries, cafés, boutique shops and lovely views of Port Townsend Bay. With its historic charm, artistic flare and coastal beauty, visitors love strolling its timeless streets and taking in the Pacific waterfront ambience. With its quiet, serene pace and cultural richness, the town is a standout destination on the Puget Sound. Its proximity to Olympic National Park makes for a great base for day trips to explore rainforests, beaches, mountains and other backcountry treasures.

St. Simons Island, Georgia

One of Georgia's Golden Isles, St. Simons Island blends Southern hospitality, scenic beauty, rich history and a relaxed beach town vibe. Located just off Georgia's southeastern coast, the island is accessible by a causeway from the mainland.

The unspoiled beaches are a definite draw for beachcombers, shell collectors and sandcastle builders. Live oaks all throughout the island drip with Spanish moss and the picturesque, still working, iconic St. Simons Lighthouse offers stunning views from the top. Pier Village is a lively, walkable heart of the island packed with charming, locally owned businesses and the entire town offers the freshest seafood and coastal Southern cuisine.

Stuart, Florida

The quaint beach town of Stuart in southeastern Florida has garnished numerous awards as "Best Coastal Small Town," "America's Happiest Seaside Town" and more.

Historic downtown Stuart is speckled with grand fountains, colorful murals, the picturesque St. Lucie River with its "Riverfront" boardwalk just feet away with a collection of unique shops. The town sports a former silent movie theatre from the 1920s, a farmers' market in Flagler Park, and lifeguard protected Stuart Beach offers dining, volleyball and basketball courts and free rolling beach wheelchairs for visitors with mobility needs.

Goleta, California

Just ten minutes north of Santa Barbara, Goleta is a lesser-known coastal escape on the Santa Barbara south coast that offers serene beaches, picturesque natural spaces the area is known for and a much quieter, laid-back atmosphere without the crowds.

A haven for outdoor enthusiasts, Goleta is ideal for kayaking along the pristine Gaviota Coast to hiking through Ellwood Mesa Preserve, home to the famous Goleta Butterfly Grove. Goleta Beach remains one of the area's best-kept secrets with a mix of sandy shorelines, a 1,500-foot fishing pier and miles of paved biking trails. The estuary that flows into the Pacific attracts diverse bird species, making it a prime spot for birdwatching.

Beaufort, South Carolina

From its charming historic streets to oak-shaded homes and waterfront scenes, Beaufort, the second-oldest city in South Carolina, is often referred to as the "Queen of the Carolina Sea Islands."

Nestled on Port Royal Island within the South Carolina Lowcountry, the entire downtown area is designated a National Historic Landmark District, celebrated for its antebellum architecture, moss-draped live oaks, cobbled streets and sweet Southern charm. The Gullah culture of Beaufort is one of the most historically rich and uniquely preserved African American cultures in the U.S.

2028
LOS ANGELES MEMORIAL COLISEUM

Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times / TNS

The Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum is framed by a plexiglass sign after the city was officially awarded the rights to host the 2028 Olympic Games on Sept. 13, 2017.

Traveling to LA28?

A guide to flights, hotels and tickets – and scoring the best deals

By CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

When it comes to making travel plans for the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympics, you may still be crouched at the starting blocks. But the race for flights, hotel reservations and event tickets will begin in 2026, long before the Games commence.

If you're planning to visit Southern California for LA28, preparation will be crucial. And a little positive thinking wouldn't hurt. As Winnipeg-based sports tour operator Dave Guenther of Roadtrips says, the Olympic cycle often feels like "two or three years of cynicism followed by two weeks of unbridled joy."

As the days tick down to the L.A. Olympics (July 14-30, 2028) and Paralympics (Aug. 15-27, 2008), we'll be answering the most important travel questions. We'll be adding updates as new information comes in, so be sure to bookmark this guide.

Getting tickets to the Games

When will tickets for the Olympic Games go on sale?

Beginning in January, fans can register to enter the lottery for Olympic tickets at the organizing committee's website, la28.org. If selected in the random draw, organizers say, fans will receive a purchase time and date for when ticket drops begin in spring 2026. Organizers say those in communities near Games venues will get early access. See a broader outline of LA28's ticket schedule here.

Also in early 2026, LA28 will start offering hospitality packages that combine event tickets with overnight accommodations, transportation and/or special events. Tickets for the Paralympic Games will go on sale in 2027.

More details are expected later this year. Anyone interested can sign up to receive announcements through the LA28 newsletter.

What will tickets cost?

Organizers say Olympic and Paralympic competition tickets will start at $28, about $2 more than they did in Paris in 2024. We don't know the high end yet. If Paris is a fair guide, most-coveted seats for the most popular events could be as high as $800 or more. The official vendors are also expected to manage a channel for resales of tickets, as they did in Paris.

The two most costly events are likely to be the opening and closing ceremonies. In Paris, per-ticket prices reached more than $2,900 for the opening, and more than $1,700 for the closing. In Los Angeles – for the first time – the opening ceremonies will be split between two venues, the L.A. Coliseum and SoFi Stadium in Inglewood.

Some of the toughest tickets, Guenther said, are gymnastics, swimming, track and field, and beach volleyball. "If you are super keen on seeing the women's gymnastics finals, you might be on a path to disappointment," Guenther said. "But if you're flexible, there are a lot of things that are going to be options."

Can I volunteer at the Games?

You can try. Recent Summer Olympics have relied upon tens of thousands of volunteers, who must meet language and training requirements. (Not every aspiring volunteer in Paris got assigned.) To stay in touch with volunteer opportunities, sign up for the LA28 newsletter.

Where will the Games happen?

The 2028 festivities will include 36 Olympic sports and 23 Paralympic sports, spread over about 40 venues. The lion's share of Olympic events will take place in downtown L.A. and Exposition Park (which together have 10 venues); Long Beach (seven venues); Carson; Inglewood; the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys.

But events are also scheduled in San Clemente, Venice, Anaheim, Pacific Palisades, Pomona and the City of Industry. The Paralympics will use many of the same venues. Indeed, this could be a learning experience for out-of-towners who don't realize just how broadly Greater Los Angeles sprawls.

The softball and canoe slalom events will be held in Oklahoma City.

Flights, hotels and Airbnbs

How far ahead can I book flights?

Most airlines usually start accepting bookings 330 days (or 11 months) before the flight date. At Southwest Airlines, lead time can be eight to 10 months.

How far ahead can I book a hotel?

Ordinarily, hotels start accepting bookings 365 days ahead, so if you're just looking for a room (and not a ticket-and-hotel package), set a reminder for around July 2027. Many hotels in Greater Los Angeles – especially those unaffiliated with global brands – are likely to follow their usual timetables. If you're interested in a hotel-ticket combo deal, those will be offered in early 2026, as previously mentioned.

Industry veterans say most major hotels around Los Angeles have probably already made deals allotting blocks of 2028 rooms to organizers of the Games or independent tour operators like Roadtrips. For example, the Queen Mary in Long Beach already has 300 rooms and suites under contract with LA28, according to managing director Steve Caloca.

Another opportunity may arise even later: Typically, organizers and tour operators often return unsold room-nights to hotel control 60 or 90 days ahead of the event, which may give consumers a chance to book those "leftovers" directly, perhaps at a lower cost.

What will hotel rooms cost?

Nothing boosts hotel prices like the Olympics, and experts say the most luxurious hotels tend to hike their prices the most. Analyzing figures from Paris, hotel industry consultants CoStar found that average hotel rates – $342-$393 in the summer of 2023 – more than doubled to $731-$939 for the 2024 Games.

L.A.'s starting hotel rates are lower than those in Paris were. CoStar found that average daily hotel rates for greater L.A. from July 14-30, 2024, were $193-$231.

What about short-term rentals?

Again, expect prices to soar. Airbnb reported a 40 percent jump in accommodations inventory and a 400 percent jump in Paris-area bookings during the 2024 Games. On the eve of the Games, property management website Hostify.com reported that asking prices for short-term rentals in Paris had quintupled from $154 nightly to $772.

Do note that at every Games, it seems, there are reports of astronomical prices, followed by later reports of 11th-hour discounts because some people got too greedy earlier on.

Los Angeles seems to be starting out with higher short-term rental rates than those in Paris. The vacation rental website Airroi.com estimates the average Airbnb rate in greater Los Angeles for the year ended August 2025 was $283.

But of course, you can spend plenty more. One broker told The Times he has already rented out an L.A. mansion for $300,000 a month in 2028.

How far ahead can I book a short-term rental?

Airbnb allows bookings up to two years in advance, which is also VRBO's default setting.

Will tensions between major L.A. hotels and union workers surface during the Olympics?

Hard to say. The L.A. City Council in May approved a measure requiring many hotels to raise their minimum wage to $30 hourly by July 2028. A business group started a petition drive seeking to undo the measure but fell short earlier this month.

Could President Trump's immigration policies affect the Games?

That's anybody's guess. Heads of state in host countries usually play a ceremonial role, standing mostly in the background. Trump may have other ideas. In early August, he announced that he would chair a task force in charge of Olympic safety, border security and transportation.

Some foreign sports fans might stay away to signal opposition to the Trump Administration, as many Canadian travelers have been doing this year. But domestic travelers, not foreign visitors, fill most seats at the Olympics. Paris tourism statistics show U.S. visitors to that city during the 2024 "Olympic fortnight" were up a relatively modest 13 percent over the previous year.

Why do people go through so much trouble to see the Games?

"There is a tremendous magic," Guenther said. "It really is quite something how people enjoy the time together with people from all over the world. ... You find yourself welling up for an athlete in a sport you've never thought about."